The Saturday Review of Literature

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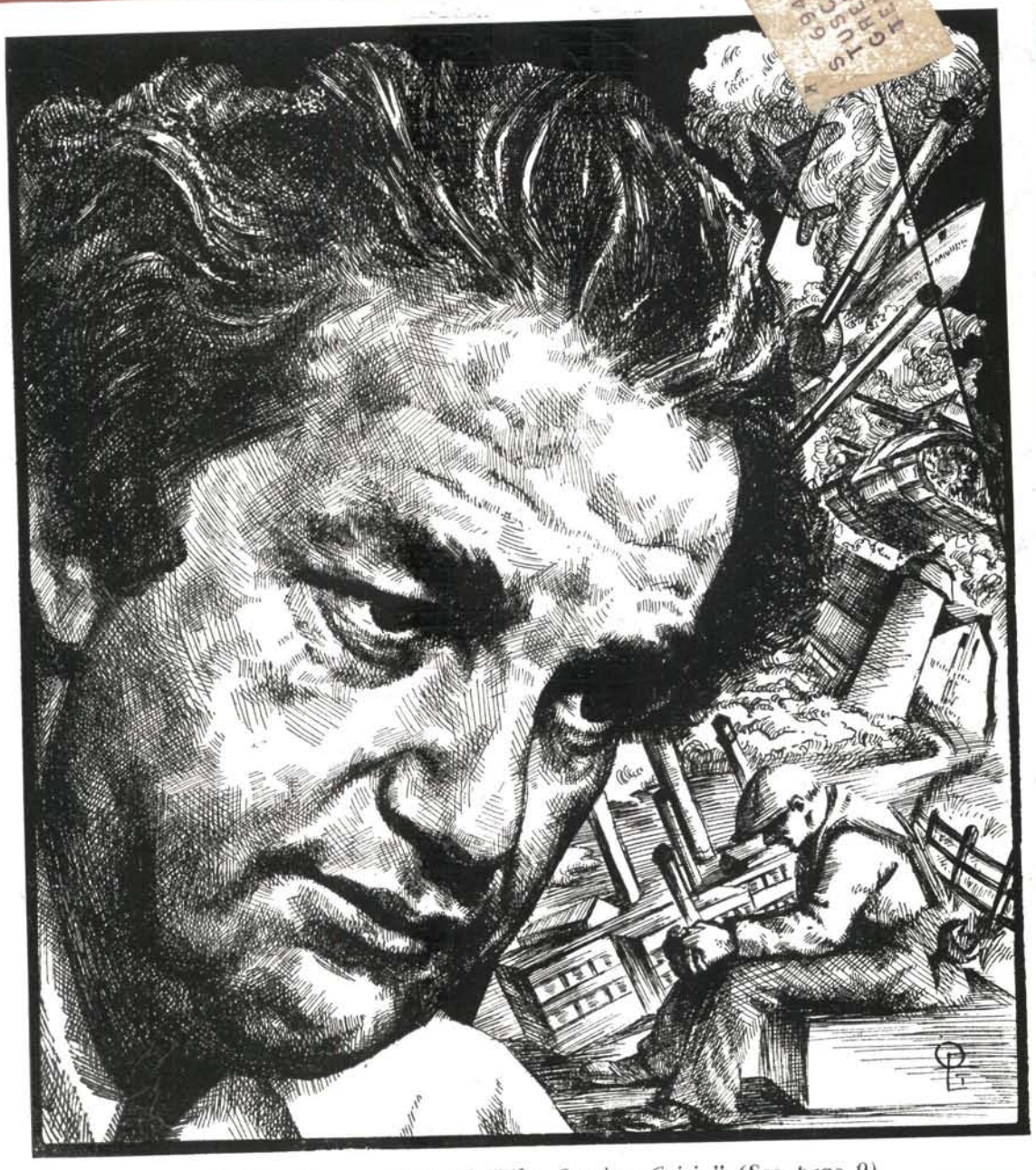

Fritz Sternberg, author of "The Coming Crisis." (See page 9)

A Short History of a Diffident Philosopher

By IRWIN EDMAN

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January 4, 1947

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TRADE Winds

PREDICTIONS FOR 1947 being the order of the day, Washington Dodge, my favorite Wall Street necromancer, essayed a few of his own before the New York Division of the American Statistical Association. Just before he ascended the podium, a more cautious associate whispered, "For heaven's sake, Wash, don't forecast anything they will remember!" Dodge proceeded anyhow to shoot the works. He declared he was tired of brokers who are mere ventriloquists—saying nothing but putting their thoughts into the mouths of customers.

> I think [said Mr. Dodge boldly] that selling since midsummer has brought the stock market to levels below those justified by conditions likely to prevail toward the end of 1947. I think numerous stocks are already at safe levels. I don't see why so many people who failed to catch the top of the bull market are so sure they can catch the bottom of the bear market.
>
> My prediction is based on the belief that sufficient immediate demand for goods exists to permit a reasonable rate of business while the misfits in our economy are being straightened out. It is also based on the belief that there will be no general weakness in commodity prices. But perhaps these beliefs are too hopeful.
>
> If they are, the alternative would be a sharp decline in business, general deflation, and large unemployment. Perhaps the new Congress would sit by and take it. I doubt it. Once again the economists would be summoned with a cry of "Quick, boys, the needle."
>
> My letters have often referred to "The Great Inflationary Market of the Forties." Perhaps the word "great" will have to be dropped. But the debt is still with us, we still lack the national willingness to pay it the hard way, and under those conditions I see no reason to anticipate a prolonged or severe decline from here on.

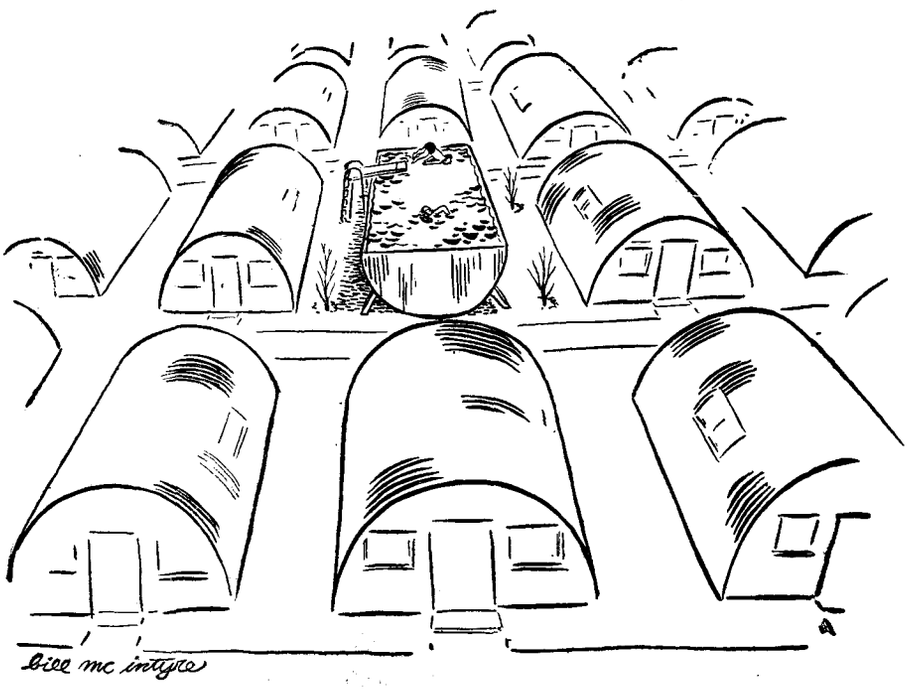
Suddenly growing cautious, Mr. Dodge reminded his audience that the most erroneous prediction could always be alibied by an adroit operative. One Englishman insisted stoutly all through the turbulent thirties that there would be no war. The day the Nazis entered Warsaw he issued his last confidential communiqué. "My competitors were wrong time after time," he pointed out. "I was wrong only this once!" A jeweler assured a customer who was examining a rather dubious-looking watch. "Even if it stops, mister, it will always be absolutely right twice a day."

Mr. Dodge has a friend who compiles an annual summary of important forecasts for a great press service. He was distressed to receive a wire from one noted industrialist that read simply, "Go to Hell." Investigation revealed, however, that the tycoon had received a garbled wire. Instead of the standard request for a 300-word statement on what business would do in 1947, *his* wire requested a statement in three words. He simply did his best to oblige. . . .

LOULA GRACE ERDMAN, a beguiling lady who teaches creative writing at West Texas State College (Canyon, Texas), read over her notes for the course, decided her precepts were sound, followed them, entered the resultant manuscript in the Dodd Mead-*Red Book* Prize Competition, and bingo!—won the $10,000 award! Her novel is called "The Years of the Locust," and will be published in September. The day after the news was broadcast, over a hundred new students suddenly decided they wanted to enroll in Miss Erdman's class. . . . A key figure in the Cerf household (one of those beautiful, beautiful cooks) has awarded Stella Standard's "More Than Cooking" (Vanguard) the supreme accolade. "Several of the recipes," she told me, "are even better than mine!" . . . A feature of Edwin Seaver's "Cross Section 1947" is two chapters from Leonard Ehrlich's "The Free and the Lonely," his first novel since "God's Angry Man." Ten of the fifty-two American authors included in the volume are appearing in print for the first time. . . .

NORMAN BRADISH, of Rollins College, reports an illuminating conversation with C. E. M. Joad, author of "A Guide to Philosophy." "What I don't understand," said Bradish, "is how you were able to accomplish the almost impossible task of setting forth other contemporary philosophers' views more clearly than they could themselves." Professor Joad answered, "I don't know how I do, but I know it's the reason most of them dislike me." . . . Benn Hall, formerly of Duell, Sloan and Pearce and Doubleday, is setting up his own firm to do publicity and intensive merchandising campaigns for special books on a free-lance basis. The charge for a six-week drive on any one title will be $600. He will handle only a limited number of books and has already signed contracts for half he plans to promote in 1947. His first client: Doubleday—whose offices he just left. . . . George E. Duckworth writes from Princeton, "In your recent paragraph on the longevity of writers, you omitted the name of Sophocles, who, like Shaw, lived to the great age of ninety." In a rather pointed postscript, Professor Duckworth adds, "You could have learned that fact in the Oates-O'Neill introduction to 'The Complete Greek Drama,' published, I am given to understand, by yourself." . . .

DINING RECENTLY AT "21" with Luther Davis, just returned from writing a brilliant script of "The Hucksters" for MGM, we sampled enough libations to put ourselves in a very mellow



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"Too small dear—see—not even room enough to swing a man in."

mood, and then descended to see the vaults and wine bins in the cellar. It seemed obvious at the time that we must lay down bins of our own, and then, after several more rounds, it occurred to us to perform a similar service for our mutual friend George Oppenheimer. His letter of thanks rates reproduction here:

> All I can say is "I am overwhelm" (the influence of writing dialogue for "Anything Can Happen"). That is the damndest present I have ever received and it has completely changed my life. I, who always thought that Tafelstein 1937 was rather stale East-side taffy, am now the proud possessor of the finest cellar since the early days of Arthur Hornblow. I now go around to dinner parties sipping wine and tossing off little remarks such as, "Rather a rare bouquet, this," "I believe there was a leather strap in this wine barrel," or, more succinctly, just saying "Phooey" and spitting out the wine on my hostess' damask tablecloth. I then explain it is rather insulting to give a man of property like myself a Virginia Dare 1945 when I am the proud owner of a Roederer 1934. I am the envy of all my friends for my Hochheimer 1934 and my Drenheimer 1937, but they are getting pretty sick of Oppenheimer 1947. As a result they now serve only water.
>
> Not only this, but I now have a place to live when I am in New York. If you think I am going to stop at either of your households when I can share a bin with St. Julian 1929 (how come this wasn't broken in the crash?), you're out of your minds. I am sending a duplicate of this letter to the Davises, so don't try reading my superb jokes to them over the telephone. . . .

Brooding over my excursion at being a "big shot" when sobriety overtook me, I thought of a possible plot for a sad "short short." A man goes to "21" and lays down a bin of the rarest vintage wines. The next evening he brings his most important client to show off his new man-about-town stature, but the formidable doorman at "21" doesn't recognize him—and won't even let him in! . . . On the subject of liquor, Henry Morgan knows a man who was weaned on it. His wife keeps several current best sellers spread open on the floor so he'll have something to read whenever he happens to fall on his face. . . .

THE GRIDIRON CLUB, composed of Washington newspaper correspondents, gives an annual dinner and show that produces the sharpest and most knowing political satire in the country. This year's shindig, naturally, highlighted the "folding up of the Democratic circus after a spectacular run of fourteen years." A Republican newcomer consoled a departing luminary, "Don't you fret now. You must have cached away plenty in all the years you were riding the gravy train." "I know," was the mournful answer, "but we Southern Democrats just don't like spending our own money." . . . Against a background of barren steppes, Henry Napoleon Bonaparte Wallace appeared, despondently leading his marshals on the retreat to Moscow. "My followers," he intoned, "we are perambulating for the greelsprail jarbanks of the heminfrar in the United States. Under our leadership we have bronwayed and ferticled the duvan sprat, folliculed the wiffen plan, and caught the Republicans red-handed—I mean black-handed." "My God," whispered Marshal Pepper, "you're really making sense tonight." "Not only that," agreed Napoleon Wallace, "but President Truman has seen this speech and approved every word."

BENNETT CERF.

"From where I sit"

IT seems appropriate to start the new and uncertain year of 1947 with mention of two books which deal with one of the most permanent of categories—Art. The two books are **Painting in the U. S. A.** by ALAN D. GRUSKIN and **Picasso: The Recent Years (1939-1946)** by HARRIET and SIDNEY JANIS.

While I do not agree with many of the choices who are enjoying current popularity in the painting field, two things are undeniable. One is that Picasso is a very famous painter; the other is that in a painting way, America is coming of age. These books are good indications of these facts. Aside from their splendid formats, and their unusually striking appearance, the text of each is enough on its own to warrant publication. MR. GRUSKIN on the one hand has written about you and art, about painters and art, and about the galleries and art in as interesting, and perhaps a little more interesting, a way as I have ever come across. And I know whereof I speak. For years I have been wading through books on art. In a word, they are *dull*. They gape, they faun, they quibble, they catalogue, they delineate, and they chop up the artist into dozens of periods of which he was never aware he was entering. The authors of most books are so "sanseeteeve" that they cannot paint themselves "bee cose de sownd off de payentbrosh on de convass makes to sheever like choke on blackboard."

GRUSKIN does not write that way. He writes simply, clearly, amusingly, and to you and me. JANIS and JANIS do dissect Picasso, but Picasso dissects everything he lays his paintbrush on, so that's okay. Furthermore, he paints like a madman (some 700 canvasses in the past six years) and it takes a good deal of analysis to keep up with him. (Sometimes JANIS & JANIS go in for a little psychoanalysis on Picasso, which isn't amiss in that case.)

One thing about the Picasso book that caused us considerable headache productionwise, was the color plates—color nothing short of miraculous. None of the paintings has been seen in dees contree.

You could buy both.

paul

DOUBLEDAY

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Calliope speaking . . .

"HAVE you ever met anyone like Achilles?" The question came in the course of a lecture on the Iliad. Had anyone, the lecturer wanted to know, met a man of Achilles' mold – heroic, temperamental and possessed of an inner certainty that he had not long to live?

Immediately several hands went up. Several of the ex-GI's had known men like Achilles. "Sure," came a quick reply, "he was a fighter pilot."

It did not stop there. Other characters from the Iliad were identified. The soldiers of World War II found no trouble in recognizing the men who had fought on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

Perhaps there is nothing to be especially surprised at in this incident. Achilles is eternal. He is a type: there will always be men like him. And other four-star generals have resembled Agamemnon. Helen has reappeared again and again to brighten and bewilder other ages. No, the mystery lies elsewhere, not with the warriors of ancient Greece or the lady for whom they fought, but with the man who could grasp them all so clearly in his mind that he makes us see and recognize them today. And with them the whole world in which they so passionately lived. It's an impossible accomplishment. As impossible as to write the plays of Shakespeare.

In the epic poems of Homer, the Greeks, too, saw an achievement beyond individual grasp. Knowing as much or as little about inspiration as we do, they spoke of the voice of Calliope, the noble voice.

It is to this voice that Mark Van Doren invites you to listen. He has chosen ten examples, ten great poems. In them the voice speaks variously. Some of the poems are tragic, some comic, some philosophical. There seems to be a multiplicity of voices. Each is intensely individual, for Calliope speaks only through the man who has made his own unique connection with universal truth. Nevertheless it is her voice speaking all the time, the voice a poet hears when he truly follows his vocation, disregarding the disturbing small voices of self-assertion and unacknowledged desire.

Of course the voice is not equally clear since the poets are not equally great. Only three of them—Homer, Dante and Chaucer—are, in Mr. Van Doren's estimation, wholly beyond criticism. But if, by comparison, the others come off less well, the company in which they find themselves is the most glorious company in the world.

A guide to such a company needs special qualities. Only a poet will do. Only a poet who is also a critic could move with freedom and assurance in this assembly. Mr. Van Doren combines these qualities with an appreciation so deep and so contagious that one finds new joy in meeting again, with him, the poets one knows best. And to know them all is, as he has said, the only conceivable way of knowing what poetry can be.

Behind the disarming directness of this book lies a more ambitious endeavor than criticism is usually willing to attempt. These are the questions to which Mr. Van Doren supplies the answers:

> "What is a given poem about? What happens in it? What exists in it? If too little of the world is in it, why is that? If all of the world is there, by what miracle has this been done? Is tragedy or comedy at work, and what is the difference between those two, and what the resemblance? Are the facts of life accounted for in the unique way that poetry accounts for them, and is this poem something therefore that any man should read? Does its author know more, not less, than most men know? Such seem to me the great questions, though they are not regularly asked by criticism."

He is, in fact, answering the question: How was the poem conceived? And he adds, "I confess that I have been ambitious in the endeavor, for I take poetry at its best to be a useful and a beautiful thing."

There are probably hundreds of ex-GI's who would raise their eyebrows if they were told they had lived through the stuff of which epics are made; that they have found poetry to be useful. And yet they have no trouble recognizing Achilles. These poems have a quality Mark Van Doren can help the rest of us to capture.

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The Saturday Review of Literature

A Short History of a Diffident Philosopher

IRWIN EDMAN

ONCE upon a time, not very long ago, there was a philosopher. He laid the flattering unction on his soul that he wrote not only about, but for, eternity. Ideally, he thought, he was not concerned with a public at all. He was the meditative monk, he told himself, the discarnate intelligence thinking in self-sufficient silence on first and last things. He told himself that he did not care what was the incidence of his conclusions on other minds. He said to himself that his writings were simply the notebooks of his spirit, the journal of his private intellect. They were reminders to him of what he once said, or what he once meant to say. He wrote at all only to help clarify himself to himself. His books were the log of his "voyagings through strange seas of thought, alone," the strict account of the storms and fogs and occasional calms through which he had passed in his intellectual wanderings toward ports he himself had scarcely found on a map. He thought if his memory were better he would not write at all, not even for himself. He remembered Plato's "Phaedrus" and knew that the word living in the mind can be dead on the page.

In common with many others in his profession, he was aware that philosophy is a soliloquy, and has to be, when it is serious and sincere. It is a thinking in silence and solitude; it is analysis that begins and ends in personal awareness. It is meditation spoken aloud by the unwary thinker and sometimes overheard by others. He had rather particularly cherished those works in philosophy which are first and last personal meditations: Marcus Aurelius earnestly addressing himself, St. Augustine doing likewise in his "Confessions," even though his book was addressed not to himself but to God; for though St. Augustine was addressing God, he was speaking really to his own soul. Our philosopher loved to browse in those solitary and retired thinkers whose writings are interior monologues and whom one seems simply to be overhearing. Pascal and his "Pensées," Amiel and his "Journal," the reflections of Nietzsche, lyric and savage; in our own day the soliloquies of Santayana. It was touching and instructive to see how other minds had tried to settle their accounts with the universe, even when they had added up their accounts wrong, as our philosopher thought.

But he began to discover that the soliloquy is never quite as private as it looks. Memories came into his head of the old-fashioned state convention, of an actor speaking to himself though in the presence of a thousand spectators. Soliloquy, too, is a kind of stage convention in philosophy. He doubted whether the most solitary thinker was ever speaking, or even quite thought he was speaking, wholly to himself. He was addressing a not impossible friend, perhaps across the centuries, or a not impossible god. It had long amused and edified our philosopher to catch the soliloquizing character, on the other hand, in systems of thought that paraded their objectivity and declaimed that it was the lineaments of the universe which they were presenting, whereas what the reader really comes upon is the lineaments of the thinker's own temperament or the outlines of the culture in which he lives. The sober, provincial piety of an eighteenth-century German Protestant shone through the analyses of Immanuel Kant; the decent, civic-minded Englishman through Mill's cool and apparently detached analyses of liberty. And he had not failed to note in what were apparently the most soliloquizing of thinkers that the soliloquy is of a very special sort: the philosopher, no mere poet, speaking a first fine careless rapture. It is, if it is entitled to be called philosophy at all, an act of thinking. Thinking accomplished is a smooth junction of related thoughts, but thinking in act is confused and tentative. It is an exploration, audacious and problematic. It is filled with blocks in its paths; it is tempted off to side paths of irrelevance. It goes back in its own track, or starts over. The soliloquy that goes on in the mind and the one that may eventually get down on paper are totally different things. It is only on paper, and not in his secret heart, that the philosopher arrives at conclusions.

Our philosopher knew he was never quite talking to himself, and he had tried these many years to figure out to whom he could properly address himself. Well, it is very hard to say. He suspected from reading the journals of philosophy and many treatises on the subject that the philosophers write for one another. And even if a philosopher intended writing for a larger public, it is doubtful indeed whether the apparatus of philosophical thinking is available, even for the educated. There are works in philoso-

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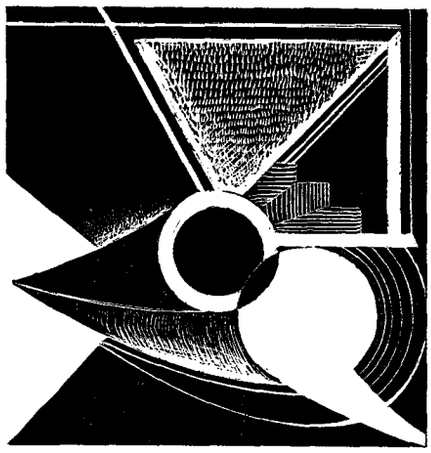
phy written in a language hardly to be distinguished from a special esoteric jargon, and philosophers are often condemned for so writing. As he read the works of some of them, our thinker wondered whether it was really necessary to use so formidable a vocabulary to say the simplest truths, or even the simplest untruths. But the layman who condemns the philosophers ought, he thought, to try some day to state quite accurately what is in his head on some basic theme. He pointed out to his lay friends who complained about philosophical jargon how hard it is to say what one intends. Even to state the simplest sensation, Proust is driven to involved sentences pages long, and Joyce to breaking up English syntax altogether. The philosopher is trying to say either immediate things or ultimate ones, and neither is easy. The very words used in common discourse have their edges rubbed off, their contours too defined. After he had wandered a while among the loose meanderings of Amiel or Kierkegaard, it was a real pleasure and relief to turn to thinkers who struggled to say precisely what they meant and who traced the implications of what they said. If philosophers wrote only for one another, our philosopher decided, it was because they would be speaking to dulled or deaf ears if they did not.

And yet he had observed among the professional philosophers he had known a great weariness of talking professionally only to one another. The philosopher was in a position which is almost one of the occupational perils of his profession; he found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He turned the pages of the professional journals in a given year and the pages were filled with arguments and controversies about technical issues that had a life for a season only, distinctions that had a certain fashionableness in discussion. A few years later the distinctions, the discussions, had all disappeared. By middle life he found himself weary of the whole round of jargon and artificial questions.

THE philosopher turned to speak to a larger public, for he had wearied of his colleagues who dealt with unreal issues in an artificial language. He wished to speak to a wider audience. But what was he to say to them, and in what tongue? He knew well enough that he could not employ the language of the schools, or discuss the problems that most philosophers continue to discuss. And yet he could not use the language of literature or of daily discourse. He must disinfect his speech of emotional overtone and of practical limitations.



Apart from language, he began to reflect on other difficulties. For it suddenly dawned on him what occurs when a philosopher speaks to the multitude. Like many another thinker, he wondered what would happen to him if he dared to speak the truth. He thought of Socrates, condemned by the Athenian jury for corrupting youth and denying the gods. He thought of Bruno, burned at the stake; Spinoza, excommunicated; and philosophers everywhere, at best stupidly smiled at and quietly scorned, or silently ignored.

He thought how ordinary life is lived in as the deposit of philosophies centuries old. An appeal to reason, he realized, could not actually be an appeal to reason, for reason has to meet all the established stupidities which have passed as reasonable. In addition, he knew that the philosopher, in order to appeal to a general public, is in danger of perilously opposing their most cherished prejudices; or, what is worse, out of a human desire to please, he comes merely to express their own narrow views. At best, he can be merely a guide to the conventional, a prophet of the already established in life and thought. If he stands by his own insights, he is in danger of not being understood at all, or, if understood, hated. Spinoza was ignored except by the wise and the intellectually sophisticated of his own day, and where known, often reviled. And he was not the only one.

Our philosopher was older now, and he knew by now that one could not come to grips with first and last things without revealing the absurdity of a great many intermediate things like property and progress and a great many current fads and follies in religion and education. Humorists could hold these things up to ridicule, but a philosopher who pointed out the absurdities of current customs and beliefs could not expect to be well received. Observing some contemporary writers, the philosopher came to the conclusion that a popular philosopher is almost a contradiction in terms. The truth of things is never flattering to human vanities or even to the most generous human hopes and aspirations. If one is to speak the truth as one sees it, one is likely not to encourage human beings very much. There is much that will be distasteful to their dignity or to their desires. They will be quieted or saddened or discomposed by the picture, for instance, of what a tiny spot in the universe the human scene is, how unpremeditated, how transient, how precarious. The philosopher, if he persists in seeing clearly, will have to point out the insanity of many cherished human institutions and the silliness of the pet oracles of current human wisdom. Our philosopher knew that he might win a large public if he spoke a little more clearly than most what everyone already believed. He could win an audience by the device of losing his own soul and hiding his own vision. He could speak to others most successfully if he said lucidly what they already wanted to hear.

OUR philosopher was puzzled and saddened by all this. But he was an idealist and a simple man, for he had not moved much in the ways of the world. He confidently imagined that if men knew the truth, the truth would make them free. He was a naïve spirit and so the truth seemed clear to him, and he thought it would be clear and transparent to any candid and unbiased soul, of whom he supposed there were many.

But how is one to speak to a multitude, our philosopher wondered, in language whose refinements are known only to a few? Supposing, as is commonly assumed, that the truth would render men free? In what terms is the truth to be made viable, what words can be used to communicate it? The truth, as the philosopher knew from his complex studies, is never simple. It is crossed by a thousand complications. It is complicated by a thousand complications and, at its heart, is a mystery. There are the complexities of discourse itself. The philosopher had, for one thing, studied many languages, and he knew how the very forms of grammar itself can transmute and distort the facts of existence, how the modulation of tone can change the force of the simplest word. He knew the tortuosities of thought, the plurality of paths open from the same hypotheses, the way in which one is trapped by the surface smoothness of a train of thought into thinking that surface smoothness follows the lines of reality or of truth. Every statement uttered is true only in part, for it is possible

(*Continued on page 25*)

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Big Crash Coming?

THE COMING CRISIS. By Fritz Sternberg. New York: The John Day Co. 1947. viii, 280 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by D. FEDOTOFF WHITE

FRITZ STERNBERG has written an important book on the coming great crisis which he considers unavoidable. Using his analysis of the "unliquidated crisis of 1929" as a springboard, he examines factors tending to aggravate the future depression. He also offers a well-reasoned conclusion that no effective measures to avoid it are likely to be taken in the United States.

This analytical structure serves Mr. Sternberg as a base for a program of action he offers to the left-wing and progressive elements in the United States with the view of forestalling what he calls a reactionary solution of the crisis, which would lead to another world war.

Both the analysis and the forecast are made from the viewpoint of a social democrat, but the author does not wear any blinkers and refuses to accept errors made by Karl Marx and Lenin in their analyses and forecasts of social change.

Mr. Sternberg's examination of the past is trenchant and convincing. He writes a clear, readable English.

In analyzing the 1929 crisis, the author points out that reference to previous economic crises made it more difficult to understand the nature of the 1929 phenomenon, as it was fundamentally different from others. He asserts that there is no parallel in the economic history of great industrial countries for the economic crisis of 1929.

Let us sum up the author's views as to what made for the extraordinary virulence of the 1929 depression. The expansion of the industrial "island" brought into the orbit of the capitalist mode of production about one-half of the world's inhabitants as against ten per cent after the end of the Napoleonic wars. During the period between the two world wars there was no remarkable expansion into new markets. The United States ceased to be an object for European capitalist expansion and became itself a great capitalist power seeking for foreign markets. The rapid industrialization of Japan added another competitor. The outcome of World War I brought in its wake not only the social and economic dislocation of Europe but also the Soviet State.

The role played by the Russian revolution had two important aspects. The Russian import market shrunk so that it ceased to play its former role of a stabilizing flywheel on European economy. The rise of the Soviet State and its activities intensified the feeling of insecurity of the property-owning classes of Europe, led to greater social contradictions and the resultant advent of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany.

The magnitude of the 1929 crisis was such that it affected all classes of society "within the framework of the capitalist system," including the agricultural populations. Its adverse influence was "even more devastating in its effects on the capitalist sector of the colonial empires than of the imperialist motherlands."

Sternberg's explanation as to why Great Britain was less affected by the crisis than other important industrial countries is not as cogent as most of his exposition. There are also one or two not very important misreadings of history (*e.g.*, remarks about the Russian front in World War I and his use of Churchill's statement on p. 65), but, taken as a whole, the picture is drawn by a firm and skilful hand. It is quite impressive.

Upon examining prospects for foreign trade and the expansion of the home market, Sternberg comes to the conclusion that our productive apparatus would not be more fully utilized "in the long run" than was the case from 1929 to the outbreak of the last war. This inevitably means a crisis of first magnitude.

In characterizing the coming depression, the author believes that it would be accompanied by the refusal of the masses to accept passively the inability of the ruling capitalist strata to avoid the crisis. The immunity of the USSR to the crisis would accentuate this tendency, while the decisive defeat of Fascism during World War II would make it more difficult for "reactionary forces everywhere, including the United States" to meet the crisis by fascist methods.

Unable to prevent the depression, says Sternberg, the "reactionary monopolist capitalist circles" would also be unable to solve it along peaceful constructive lines. Their attempts to alleviate the crisis would lead them in the direction of intensification of the "new American imperialism" and expansion of war industries. The already present tendency of supporting "all capitalist and reactionary elements abroad" in their struggle with left-wing forces would be further extended.

Mr. Sternberg believes that his analysis of the forces in the coming crisis might strengthen the left-wing progressive forces "by stripping them of certain dangerous illusions." His own program includes the insistence that the state must accept formal responsibility for maintaining full employment, an armament program bereft of any tendency for development

THE AUTHOR: Fritz Sternberg, born fifty-one years ago in Breslau, has been on the firing line of ideas and ideals since the middle of World War I, when he left the University of Breslau with a Ph.D. and began a career of teaching and lecturing at Heidelberg and other leading German universities. His first book, "Imperialism," appeared in 1926, but before that he had written for scientific and political magazines all over Europe, pouring the volatile, vigorous nature of himself into a constant stream of opinions, pleas, supplications, arguments, and interpretations. He was anti-Hitler before the foam was off the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. In March 1933, he fled from Germany to Switzerland, where copies of his new book, "The Decline of German Capitalism," were smuggled to him. From Switzerland, France, England, and finally the United States, he peppered Hitler with his prose. In New York, meeting publisher Richard J. Walsh, he talked excitedly for hours, waving aside the interpreter he had brought along. Approximately ten per cent of what he said was comprehensible to Mr. Walsh, who later signed him up, along with his translator, Edward Fitzgerald. "Fascism and Power," which appeared in the Netherlands in 1935, was not published here. Nor was "Germany and a Lightning War" (issued in London) given an American printing, being considered too technical in a military sense. (Mr. Sternberg writes for *The Infantry Journal.*) His first American book was "Fivefold Aid to Britain." With Hitler finished, Mr. Sternberg felt he could return to general ideas and ideals in politics and economics, hence "The Coming Crisis."

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into a militaristic Frankenstein monster, and keeping American support from "feudal classes" in Asia, as well as the abandonment of the opposition to the growth of left-wing trends in Europe with a clear recognition of the right of the European states to decide their own future without outside interference.

One leaves the book with the impression that the incisive analysis of the past is not matched in quality by the attempt to forecast the future. There is a great deal of dogmatism in the latter. Conservative policies conceivably may take an entirely different course from that charted by the author.

The importance of the book is in its timely reminder that the 1929 crisis was not resolved by the time war broke out, the analysis of the forces which made for its magnitude and the exposition of conditions leading to another crisis as great or greater than that of 1929. This should suffice to attract a host of readers to this book. The outcome of the coming crisis may decide the fate of the world.

A Famous Kansan on Current Events

SELECTED LETTERS OF WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE: 1899-1943. *Edited by Walter Johnson. New York: Henry Holt & Co.* 1946. 460 *pp.* $3.75.

Reviewed by H. J. HASKELL

A TRUCK left Emporia, Kan., one day this autumn loaded with the papers of William Allen White, bound for the Library of Congress, Washington. There were many thousand items on the truck, most of them letters and carbon copies of replies to letters. Professor Johnson has attempted to skim the cream of these letters for this book. As he remarks in the preface, there are enough lively and important letters in the collection to fill several volumes. The task of selection must have been difficult. There have inevitably been omissions that some of White's friends would deplore. But so far as this reviewer can determine the job has been completely done. The introduction is good and the explanatory notes useful.

A mass of material about the famous Kansas editor has now been published, including two rather full biographies, two volumes of editorials, the recent autobiography, and this book of letters. Another biography, announced by Professor Johnson, is to follow next year. The publication of so many volumes testifies to the public interest in William Allen White both as a rare human being and as an authentic prophet of the Valley of Democracy. The letters have been chosen for their bearing on the editor as a newspaperman, novelist, biographer, political observer, and leader and as a personality with "unconventional mental operations."

As White was the product of the Midwestern environment, his letters are a storehouse of material on the development of that region, socially, economically, and culturally. They trace the progress of the agrarian revolt of the Bull Moose movement which hardly stirred the industrialized East. They show the Midwestern reaction to the industrial revolt of the big manufacturing areas under the second Roosevelt. And they picture the advance from isolationism to conscious participation in world affairs.

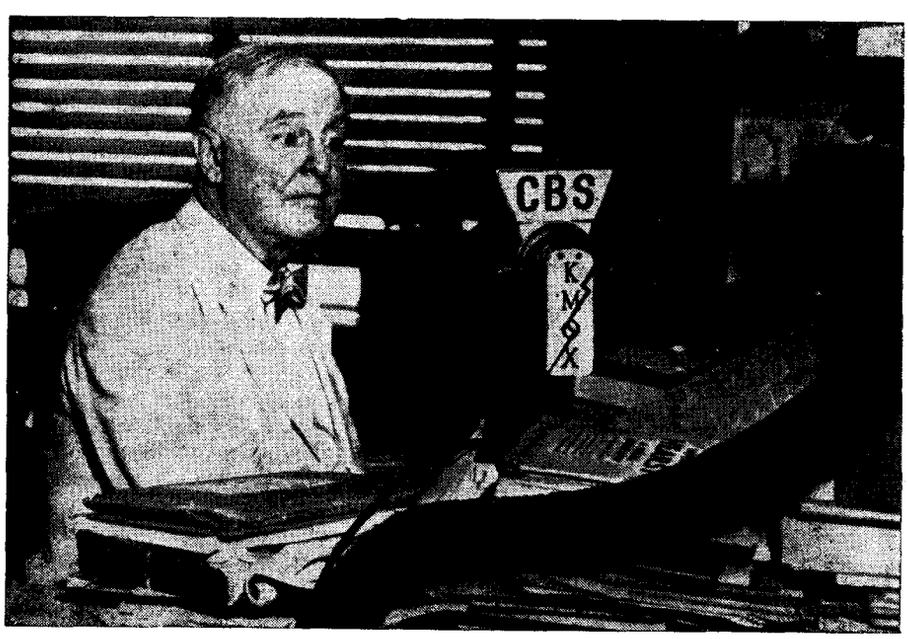
The record in the letters is told with tolerance and good humor and with that picturesque use of language that makes his writings a delight. Thus to Victor Murdock of the *Wichita Eagle,* comrade of the Bull Moose crusade, he wrote of the Republican standpatters who hadn't had an idea since the fall of Babylon, and "while they agree with the general justice of the fall, think it was hasty and ill-considered."

A characteristic comment was sent to his friend Alf Landon, Republican Presidential nominee in 1936, on a speech made in the war criticizing Great Britain. "Your speech stinks," he wrote kindly but candidly. "This is no time to stress our distrust and dislike of Great Britain. We have got to live with the old hag—a sort of emeritus mother-in-law of the world, a decayed dowager, and while we should not blink the facts about her, I don't think it wise at this time to emphasize these facts."

The transition of the author of the conservative editorial, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" publicized by Mark Hanna in 1896, to the liberal leader in the Bull Moose movement is treated at some length in the autobiography and the two volumes of editorials. On this period the letters throw little additional light. They do give intimate and interesting behind-the-scenes glimpses of the principal actors of that dramatic period, and show White as privately cold to Woodrow Wilson for whose achievements he gave publicly such warm praise.

The autobiography ends in the early 1920's. It is for the period leading into the Second World War that the letters are of especial historical value. It was in this period that White made a great contribution by his leadership of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, "an awkward name," as he confessed. The story of the organization of the Committee, and of White's resignation from it growing out of disagreements within the ranks is an important footnote to American history. It is a picture of the confusion and difficulties attending the transformation of American isolationism into a deepening understanding of the momentous world issues involved.

By and large the letters help explain not only some of the important developments of an era, but also the reasons for the growing influence that this country editor exerted upon the national life. Above all, they are good reading.



These letters of William Allen White "help explain the reasons for the growing influence that this country editor exerted upon the national life."

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Fighter for Three Great Causes

JOURNEY THROUGH MY YEARS. By James M. Cox. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1946. 463 *pp.* $4.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. COX is that very unusual combination, a distinguished public servant who is also an astute observer and a skilful reporter of what he has observed. He had his first glimpses of Washington in 1894, when he went to the capital as secretary to a Miami Valley Congressman; he remained in close touch with national affairs down until the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a warm friend and frequent correspondent. In this full volume he gives us something far superior to the ordinary casual book of political recollections. It is a carefully planned review of fifty years of American history, full of shrewd insights and ripe wisdom; his recollections of service as Representative, Governor, Presidential candidate, vice-chairman of the American delegation to the London Economic Conference, and owner of important newspapers in three states are not merely presented with zest, but interpreted with real penetration.

Throughout all these years Mr. Cox has been a fighter, doughty but tolerant and urbane, for three great causes. One is political reform of the Wilsonian and (with some reservations) Rooseveltian types. As a youth he was brought up under the influence of great liberals—Robert G. Ingersoll, whom he heard lecture; Steffens, Tarbell, and other muckrakers whose books he read; the municipal reformers, "Golden Rule" Jones, Whitlock, and Tom L. Johnson. When he was elected Governor of Ohio he led in the renovation of the state constitution, and in a dozen far-reaching reforms: municipal home-rule, statewide primaries, a civil service system, the initiative and referendum, the improvement of the judiciary, the adoption of a sound public-school system, adequately supported, and so on. His loyalty to progressive ideas has never abated. Another of his causes has been humanitarian reform. He gives here some interesting stories of his fight, with the help of Harvey Firestone and others, for a sound workmen's compensation law; of his interest, along with Whitlock and Clarence Darrow, in prison reform; and of his labors toward a saner solution of the liquor problem than the Anti-Saloon League offered. The catastrophe of the Ohio floods of 1913 gave him an opportunity to help draft and carry through the Miami Valley Plan, in large degree the precursor of the TVA.

But his most intense devotion has been given to the cause of international order and collective security. Nominated for President in 1920, he was under pressure from various Democratic leaders to soften his loyalty to the League and to Woodrow Wilson; but from the outset he defiantly asserted both. The call on Wilson which he vividly describes here was his own idea that moment the San Francisco convention made its choice. (Incidentally, he tells how he was responsible for the Vice-Presidential nomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who accompanied him.) Mr. Cox's chapters on the campaign, one of which he calls "The Great Conspiracy," are valuable contributions to history. Wilson thought that the party would win; Mr. Cox was aware that it had no chance. He tells precisely how German, Irish, and other prejudices were aroused; how Will Hays sent hecklers ahead of Cox's train; how high tariff money was thrown into the battle. A striking pendant to this section is Mr. Cox's chapter on "The Ohio Gang." While kindly toward Harding, he tells the exact truth about Daugherty's long career of corruption. As the United States abandoned the League, Mr. Cox remained faithful to the Wilsonian dream. He continued to fight for it in his journals, and the United Nations has had no champion more militant or unwearied.

Courage, quiet and unspectacular but unyielding, has (as this book amply demonstrates) been one of the author's cardinal qualities. Some minor episodes of his life have shown it in striking degree. As a young newspaper owner in Dayton, he found that John H. Patterson, founder of the National Cash Register Company, had fallen under the domination of an English adventurer named Palmer. The company was being wrecked and the city injured. Mr. Cox exposed the situation, resisted a series of Patterson's libel suits, drove Palmer from town, and later received the manufacturer's thanks. Much later, after he had bought the *Miami Daily News* in Florida, he used it to rid the city of Al Capone and his gang. They made an effort to buy the *News* for five millions in cash, but the fight was not halted till Capone and others were on the way to prison. In Georgia, Mr. Cox similarly employed his *Atlanta Journal* to attack Gene Talmadge and his degrading policies, and assist Ellis Arnall in his conquest of the state.

Harris and Ewing.

F.D.R., Assistant Secretary of Navy, campaigns as James M. Cox's Vice-Presidential running mate in the 1920 election.

The account of the London Economic Conference here presented, traversing many of the statements about it made in Raymond B. Moley's "After Seven Years," and strongly taking the side of Secretary Hull against his troublesome junior, will be neglected by no student of that abortive gathering. Mr. Cox believes that inadequate preparation was made for the conference. He thinks (and gives good reasons for thinking) that Moley was a blundering interloper. It is strongly implied that President Roosevelt erred in sacrificing international monetary stabilization to his belief that nothing must interrupt the upward swing of American prices—which soon ceased anyway. But in a chapter on "Roosevelt and His Letters" Mr. Cox amply demonstrates his admiration for the late President. His correspondence with Roosevelt, begun in 1921, was carried down to the fall of 1944. It is full of remarkable bits.

> By the way [Roosevelt wrote him on November 14, 1944] I understand there was an election a week ago Tuesday. I was mad for two or three weeks before that, and I am still mad. That may not be Christian but it is a human fact. It was the dirtiest campaign I have ever experienced, and I may end up by writing an addition to the Books of the Apocrypha, illustrating that dirty campaigns do not pay the throwers.

Mr. Cox has given us one of the best books of political reminiscences in many years; a book valuable for its inside story of important transactions, its many anecdotes and sketches of people, and its personal record—but, most of all, valuable for its animating spirit.

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Apostle of "Salesmanship" in Print

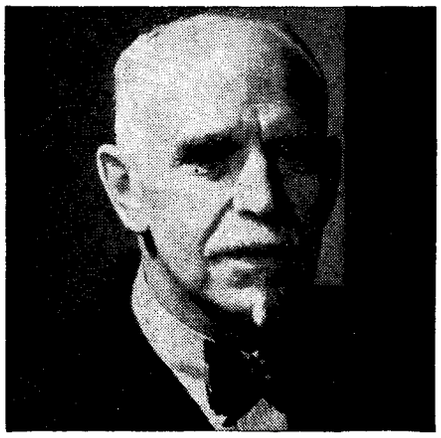
AND HEARING NOT—. By Earnest Elmo Calkins. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1946. 387 *pp.* $3.75.

Reviewed by J. R. COMINSKY

POSTERITY'S researchers will have their work cut out for them when they start excavating the year 1946. The confusions and contradictions of our times will probably be no more baffling than those presented by the state and standards of one phase of our existence—advertising. For in the past year these researchers will find two books, Frederic Wakeman's "The Hucksters," in which a fictionalized advertising man, Victor Norman, brash, unprincipled, and conscienceless, so excited book readers that the yarn spun about him became the No. 1 fiction best seller, and another called "And Hearing Not—," the biography of a great, flesh-and-blood apostle of "salesmanship in print"—Earnest Elmo Calkins. The latter turned out to be a powerful antidote to the former which sent editors and writers of the advertising trade press scrurrying into their storm cellars shouting "it ain't true." Instead of concentrating on "The Hucksters," which, unfortunately, is too much of a documentary to lose stature by attack, it would seem wiser and pleasanter to talk about Mr. Calkins's book, one of the literary legacies of a troubled time.

Like all men whose accomplishments are real and lasting, Mr. Calkins is a human being of mind and heart so large that it is inevitable that readers of his book must fall in love with him. Once that emotional state is reached, how can anyone pretend to be doing an objective and dispassionate critique or commentary? The writer makes no pretense of such human flawlessness.

If the Hollywood exploitation boys or those "come-on" artists of the radio who try to lure you into the next instalment were to tell you about Mr. Calkins's book, they probably would say:



—*Halleck J. Finlay.*

Earnest Elmo Calkin's book is "one of the literary legacies of a troubled time."

"You will not be ashamed to cry over Mr. Calkins's struggle against the handicap of deafness which overtook him at the age of six."

"You will applaud his uphill fight for truth and good taste."

"Your life will take on new meaning when he tells you how much human happiness is within the reach of all of us."

"You will be uplifted by how much he benefited by hobbies that you, too, can follow."

"You will plunge into new depths of despair when he reveals how he was misled in his financial planning by consulting the people you would trust most."

But it would be misleading to intimate that "you, too, can have all this, and money, too," by merely patterning your life after that of Mr. Calkins. For here was a man with an unusual mind, a sterling character, a real appreciation of life's values, and an understanding of his fellow man that can come only through painstaking study, thought, travel, and unchangeable ideals. There can be no human happiness without clarity of mind and motives and an inflexible will toward a definite goal. Mr. Calkins possessed such clarity and will to an extraordinary degree.

Not only is "And Hearing Not—" a highly inspirational book; it is a magnificently informative book—informative about publishing and advertising, informative about living and learning, and especially informative about the things outside your work that can enrich each day of your life. Mr. Calkins is now in his seventy-eighth year, and we should like to make a suggestion to the advertising fraternity: Why not start planning now an eightieth birthday party for the man who won the first Harvard gold medal as "the individual who has done most to raise the standards of advertising"?

"THE MOST ASTOUNDING PROPOSAL EVER MADE"

[An excerpt from "And Hearing Not—"]

THE most astounding proposal ever made to us or any advertising agency was this: We were called upon by the vice president of a large corporation with a tidy advertising account to discuss handling it. As it was a confidential interview, Holden did the talking. It was difficult to pour confidences into my dulled ears without telling Europe. It seemed that the advertising of this company was the perquisite of a lady to whom the president was indebted for many favors. His method of rewarding her was to give her the disposal of the account. We could have it if we would come to terms with her. The question was how much out of our commission would we allow her.

The romantic and dramatic possibilities of the situation appealed to me. Here was a bit of ancient French or English history in the twentieth century, the Merry Monarch conferring the revenue of one of his provinces upon some court favorite, a modern Maintenon or Pompadour. It is a loss to the gayer side of advertising that we did not feel able to enter into such an eighteenth-century triangle. It would have put a lot of color into what is sometimes a prosaic business. The process of soliciting an increase of appropriation through the president's mistress must appeal to every resourceful agency representative.

Scene: the lady's boudoir.

"Do you love me as much as ever, George?"

"Of course I do. Why?"

"It's about time you made me a present."

"What is it this time?"

"I want 12 pages in the S.E.P."

"Is that all? I'll add Munsey's and McClure's."

And the next day the agency gets the order for space.

Newspaper flights and double-spreads instead of diamond sunbursts and pearls. There have been other ways of stepping up a client's appropriation no more legitimate than this.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 666)

PAUL:
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

For we wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

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Death and Post-mortem of a Regime

DEAR FATHERLAND, REST QUIETLY. A Report on the Collapse of Hitler's "Thousand Years." Written and photographed by Margaret Bourke-White. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1946. 175 *pp.* $3.

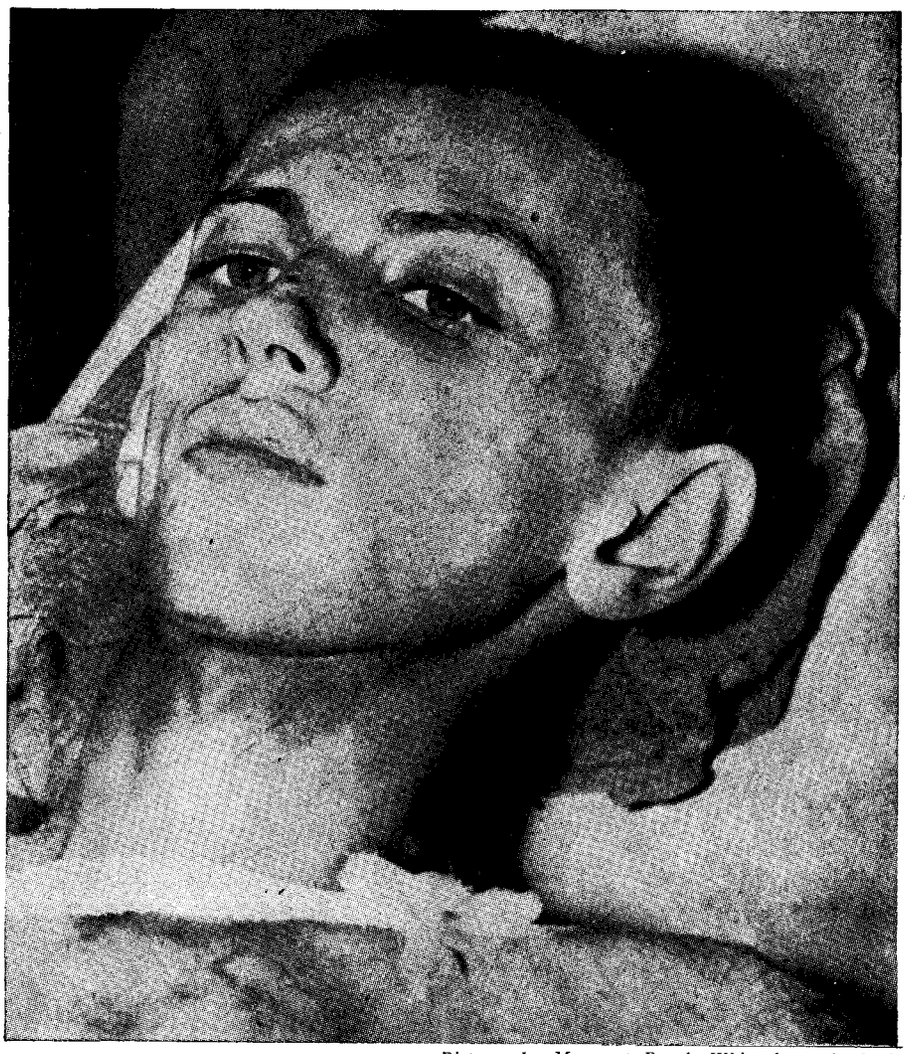
Reviewed by DONALD ARMSTRONG

MISS BOURKE-WHITE was a witness of the last days of Hitler's Germany and the beginning of the Allied occupation. She watched while Germany paid for the crime of war. Her camera and pen record the death of a regime and the subsequent post mortem. It is an ugly and depressing picture of just retribution. They used to glorify war in Germany as the summit of human achievement. They exalted barbarity in warfare as the ultimate and best weapon of victory. They sowed the wind and they reaped the whirlwind. But apparently ruins of cities, the loss of the war, their own sufferings have taught them nothing. Miss Bourke-White concludes that these people with few exceptions consider their only crime was losing the war. They are thoroughly unrepentant or they were when these photographs and notes were taken just prior to and soon after the surrender of Germany.

More than a hundred photographs of the excellence that Miss Bourke-White has accustomed us to expect show the chaos of Germany's devastated homes and factories, the gruesome victims of German brutality in concentration camps, samples of the Herrenvolk from the Herren of the Ruhr industries to the Volk in a frantic search for food and shelter. Some of the best pictures were taken from airplanes. Difficulties and distance never deterred Miss Bourke-White when she wanted to photograph a scene, a person, or a group. Her portraits of people and places were taken in many parts of Germany. These photographs are vivid and terrifying reminders of the scourge of war. They ought to be an effective argument for an enduring peace and for the responsibility of all thinking men to consider the prevention of war a primary duty.

Unfortunately, the people who caused this catastrophe are as depressing in their present outlook on life and government as the pictures of their physical ruin. Miss Bourke-White searched the German mind and heart with a success that parallels her remarkable skill in photography. She rarely generalizes. Her views are based on scores of interviews. For example, an unregenerate young German woman, who graduated in journalism at Columbia University, still considered Hitler the great leader and continued to feel all the intolerance that was by no means introduced into Germany by the Nazis. The specific and concrete case histories of German mental and spiritual demoralization are convincing.

This book is a collection of superb photography and reporting. It is loosely organized and is unexpected and unpredictable in its transition from one subject to another. The net result, however, is a lasting impression of the twilight of the Nazi gods whose evil will live for at least the thousand years predicted by Hitler.



—Pictures by Margaret Bourke-White from the book.

Approaching a rendezvous with death in the Buchenwald murder factory.

Chauvinistic Professor Koch is unconcerned with suffering Germany caused.

Boys imitating bourgeois fathers, carry briefcases.

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The Past as a Pageant

LYDIA BAILEY. By Kenneth Roberts. Garden City: Doubleday & Co. 1947. 488 pp. $3.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THE special qualities which have made Kenneth Roberts a master of historical fiction have never been better exhibited than in this crowded tale of adventure in the years of the Haitian rebellion and the Barbary pirates. Vigor, sincerity, reach of vision; ability to create breathless suspense; the imagination to see a thousand scenes as they actually occurred, and the pictorial power to place them before the reader; a courageous fidelity to his own unconventional interpretation of historical events and personages; a deep feeling for the fears, hates, and heroisms of men—these are his virtues. He sees the past as a pageant. To him it is full of unusual people, arresting events, the primal emotions of victory and defeat, exaltation and degradation. His masculine imagination sometimes leads him into excess. His almost lyric joy in racing adventure and rich contrasts of environment made him cram two separate books into "Northwest Passage"; and in this volume the hero strides through enough vicissitudes and perils to equip three ordinary novels. But such is Mr. Roberts's spell that it is but rarely we exclaim, "This is overdone."

From the Revolution, its ardors and endurances, Mr. Roberts has moved forward into the early national era. Scorning that overgrazed pasturage of novelists, the West, he has turned overseas. Some New England scenes connected with Adams's Sedition Act and the contest between Federalists and Jeffersonians paint the background of the time, and introduce the hero, Albion Hamlin, an impetuous, hard-headed Yankee lad bred to the law but a lover of the outdoors. His impetuosity causes him to fall in love with the portrait of the girl who gives her name to the book, and his tenacity leads him to set sail to the West Indies to find her. It is far that the pursuit leads. Haiti, fighting off Boneparte's army while it massacres thousands of Creoles, fills the first half of the book. Then, as Toussaint l'Ouverture and yellow fever conquer the French, the action is swiftly transferred to North Africa in the days of Tripolitan aggression, American retaliation, and the gallant march of General William Eaton to Derna. From these conflicts and dangers the hero bears his Lydia back to rural peace.

The chief glory of the book are the Haitian chapters, which few readers are likely to forget. To begin with, Mr. Roberts tells a continuously exciting story. The arrival of the French army under the strutting General LeClerc, his wife—Napoleon's sister—one of the passengers in the luxurious fleet; the defiance offered by the Negro forces under Henri Christophe, Dessalines, and Toussaint l'Ouverture; the burning of the incredibly gaudy city of Cap François, with all its shops, mansions, sugar-warehouses, and dens; the massacre of the *blancs* as a savage guerrilla warfare begins; the battles in which black musketeers and machete-swingers butcher the stiff invading regiments; the other horrifying preludes to the final extinction of the French by tropical disease—this has never been told half as well as Mr. Roberts tells it. He recreates it in all its wild, color-drenched detail. He is equally good at describing the sights of Haiti—the tumbled purple mountains, the misty blue peaks stabbing up out of rich forests, the velvety plantations draped over green savannahs; the smells—the scent of coffee and sticky-sweet sugar, the stench of decaying fish and open sewers, the musky odor of crowded natives; and the sounds—the musket-slapping, the drum-pounding, and the difference between screams of fright and screams of agony. But he is at his best in human portraiture. Take Dessalines—

> Close to us, on a shaggy little nag, sat a Negro like a gigantic toad painted black and highly polished. He had thick, hunched shoulders; long, limber feet; a face scarred with parallel knife-cicatrices and mottled with warts; an enormous mouth with lips drawn tight against his teeth in an angry grin. He wore a blue handkerchief bound around his head; and pressed down upon the handkerchief was a chapeau. . . . His uniform coat, whose collar rose up to frame his toadlike head, was encrusted with arabesques of gold lace, and his knee breeches were of white plush, spotted and stained with horse-sweat. His eyes were the ugliest part of him. The warty lids were half-lowered; and the pupils, more like ebony than human eyes, were set in whites the color and texture of blood-streaked goose -fat. Those eyes were never still.

—From the book jacket.

The portrait which precipitates Kenneth Robert's Yankee hero's love for Lydia Bailey and his pursuit of her to far places.

The lurid Haitian scenes will persist in any reader's memory. One is the frightful holocaust as Cap François was put to the torch under Christophe's orders, while maddened Negroes, fearful of a return to slavery, roamed the streets hunting down the inhabitants. The other is the bloody repulse of the French regulars on the slopes below the fort at Crete à Pierrot, which Toussaint had ordered to be held to the last. All the personages are vigorously painted. Papa Toussaint, dwarfish, grotesque in long red cape and feathered cap, but with a touch of genius, is the chief; next to him stands toadlike Dessalines, spouting obscenity, a treacherous brute, but superior in judgment, audacity, and energy to the best French leaders; and not far below either is Lamartinière, a gentleman and a hero. The book briefly but accurately depicts the Creole civilization, its impermanent luxuries built on a cruel abuse of slave labor, its provincialism strangely mixed with arrogance. The pages furnish incisive vignettes of the half-savage African society, with its voodoo, its childish emotionalism, and its devotion to freedom.

The Tripolitan scenes, while good, are less vividly executed. Our hero Albion, after escorting a Haitian refugee back to France, is caught by the Barbary corsairs and turned into a gardener-slave. Naturally he manages to project himself into the thick of the hostilities between Thomas Jefferson and Bashaw Joseph. What stands out most sharply in this cross-section of the Barbary Wars is the stupidity of half the American commanders: Bainbridge, Porter, and Barron. Against their incompetence or worse the virtues of a remarkable leader shine the more brightly: General Eaton, son of Dertmouth, tireless organizer and courageous fighter, full of contempt for the Navy and of his well-laid plan for righting American wrongs by ousting Bashaw Joseph and placing his brother Hamet on the Tripolitan throne. His great march is well described. Beside him rises a figure but slightly less remarkable, his adjutant Eugene Leitensdorfer, ruddy, cheery, and farsighted. Hamet himself is a gallant spirit. Not quite as

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much élan goes into the adventures of these later chapters, not quite as intense a use of the imagination into their scenes, as into the Haitian pages; but the interest never lags.

It is a rich, new concoction that Mr. Roberts has given us. Some of its best plums can barely be mentioned in a brief summary: the character of King Dick, the hero's Haitian friend and guide, for example, or the well-told exploits of Preble in Tripoli harbor. The mixture is flavored with a few dashes of philosophy. Albion develops a strong sense of the essential capacity of the black race to nourish virtues equal to those of the whites. He becomes convinced that a silly consistency is one of the cardinal faults of many leaders, and is responsible for much of human woe. Historical accuracy stamps the whole novel. Specialists may quarrel with Mr. Roberts about a few matters, to be sure, such as his dark view of the character of Tobias Lear; but his interpretation is always defensible. The only fault of the book is a certain excess of richness. It is stuffed with too many plums; in leading its hero through so many stormy scenes, and such wildly romantic passages, it sometimes strains our credulity. Mr. Roberts still has to learn restraint. But it is easy to forgive the luxuriance of so delightful a tale.

Chart of the Chinese Spirit

STORIES OF CHINA AT WAR. Edited by Chi-Chen Wang. New York: Columbia University Press. 1946. 158 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THE value of Chi-Chen Wang's collection of "Stories of China at War" is considerably greater than the sum of its parts. There are good stories in it, stories which have warmth, humor, and characteristic racial charm, but they are not very powerful and not very distinguished, to put it mildly. In fact, to any ivory-tower reviewer, they would seem neither individually important nor collectively impressive, and the chances are that he would pay little attention to them. He would, I submit, be half right and half terribly wrong. As works of art, these short tales are not impressive, but as documents they are, particularly in the aggregate, of rather striking importance.

It is to the observer of modern China that Mr. Wang's collection is of value, and since anyone seriously concerned with the state of the shrunken post-war world should of grim necessity include China in his observations, the potential audience for such a book is a sizable one. Whatever its limited literary worth, this selection of sixteen characteristic stories by thirteen representative Chinese authors adds up into an historic record of the course of the cultural and intellectual atmosphere among the liberal intelligentsia of wartime China. It is melancholy to add that the record is a depressing one.

This is not because the authors have failed in their attempts to set down the mood and spirit of their people during their long and desperate resistance to Japanese aggression; on the contrary, it is because, whatever other weakness their stories may possess, they have succeeded so well. This book is unquestionably an accurate and sensitive chart of the fluctuations of the national spirit during a momentous period in history, and one clue to its nature is the fact, which the editor notes in his introduction, that he has selected no stories written after 1942.

The change was grim, steady, and inexorable, and that is the way it is here reported. The first stories, written in 1937 and '38, are, for all their report of death, destruction, defeat, and enemy ruthlessness, of high spirit and gay heart, as they deal with the adventures of peasant guerrillas, simple soldiers, and an occasional intellectual of the underground resistance. After a long period of national weakness and disunion, the people are at last fighting against the Japanese aggressor in a united front, and even temporary defeat cannot conquer the happy sense of a good fight well begun. A new China seems to be springing up, laughing, courageous, and bursting with vitality and enthusiasm, from the chaos and social conflict of the old.

Then the atmosphere changes. Weakness, vacillation, and corruption, the old habits and the old chaos, return, and the united front and the spirit which animated it are gone. Self-seekers, puppets, traitors, moral and physical weaklings, and oppressors still carrying the banner of Free China arise and increasingly have their day. The moral and intellectual atmosphere has grown fetid and unwholesome. What the editor calls the "air of hopefulness in the land which infected the masses and the intellectuals alike," and which was the unwitting contribution of Japan to Chinese nationalism, has gone, and Mr. Wang decides to seek out no more stories for his collection, since, he has found, they are too bitter and disillusioned.

Of the writers represented the best known in America is Lau Shaw, author of the beautiful and moving "Rickshaw Boy." He is shown in three tales, one cheerful enough, the other two increasingly bitter. The last tale in the volume, and in the time of writing, is by Kuo Mo-jo, a distinguished liberal scholar, and it is the most melancholy of all. The contrast between these grim tales and the winning high spirits of such earlier stories as "Chabancheh Makay" and the touching "Heaven Has Eyes" is the mark, not of their authors' merits, but of China's tragedy.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 185

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 185 *will be found in the next issue.*

OLIE PJBE XLIEKSKQ, XSUL

PJBE OICZR, SK I GESNICL

GJZULC: IKA AJ KJC

YLELXP GBXX SC JBC IKA

DCESUL SC; YLELXP CJ

DRJO PJB RINL JKL.

—GRSXSG DCIKRJGL—LIEX

JM ZRLDCLEMSLXA. —XLCCLE

CJ RSD DJK.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 184

No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men.

THOMAS CARLYLE.
Heroes and Hero-worship.

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From an Expert Craftsman

THE LAST CIRCLE. By Stephen Vincent Benét. New York: Farrar, Straus & Co., Inc. 1946. 309 *pp.* $3.

Reviewed by ROBESON BAILEY

THIS is a collection of fifteen of Stephen Vincent Benét's short stories and of twelve of his short poems. The selection was made by his widow, Rosemary Carr Benét, from material that has not hitherto been published in book form. Mrs. Benét contributes a brief introduction.

Whatever may be the eventual position of Benét's work in the ranks of American letters, one suspects that it will persist, in a quiet way, pretty far forward, despite the cyclical clamor as advance guards change. He was not, certainly, narrowly representative of those hectic and eclectic years during which he wrote. Yet is it not startling to remember that the period of his fame compassed a mere fourteen years from the publication of "John Brown's Body" to his too early death? Somehow, one thought of him as a solid, permanent figure in the shifting foreground of his times. I think this impression is explained by the enduring traditions of our literature which he did represent so well: folk history, humor, and fantasy. And doubtless the impression was strengthened by the memorably pleasant quality of his work, a quality that was not generally very noticeable during those years.

Stephen Vincent Benét had a faith and a delight in people and a belief that they could come to good ends. And it is precisely this faith and delight and belief that distinguish his work from that of most of his noisier contemporaries, that make his storied people stand out from the poor, vivisected, and soul-dissected creatures of the recently fashionable school of story writing, creatures whose chief (and usually only) interest for the reader is clinical and diagnostic. Benét's people exist in an older context, but a context which, his stories amply prove, has not been invalidated by either the too-much-abused popular story or the too-much-admired case study of defeat. It is a context of accomplishment and affirmation; of reaffirmation of the ancient and necessary faiths that man not only can defeat his devils but can act with decency toward his fellows. Thus, in "The Bishop's Beggar" a young man's worldly ambitions are diverted into spiritual channels; in an eerie fantasy called "The Minister's Books" (distinct echoes of Hawthorne here) another tortured soul fights upward from suicidal despair to joy and faith.

Now this kind of story is not, as the gloomy insist, a whistling in the dark or a craven escape from reality. Actually, it is the assertion of a fact of experience. Most of us know a good many people who have been brought low by the devils that plague mankind—call them, if you wish, neuroses. Some of these people have succumbed, and are either useless or ingloriously dead. More, many more in my experience, have struggled against their devils and diseases and emerged in varying degrees of triumph. Maybe mine is a lonely experience? One must doubt it. Let the reader check it for himself—but give full credit to those who have won out!

Other of Benét's refreshing qualities are here. One of them, his folk humor, is shown in an hilarious tale about P. T. Barnum, an angel, and James Bailey. Another, his understanding of childhood and adolescence (so memorably expressed in an older story called "Too Early Spring") comes out in "The Three Fates," a story about a sensitive boy in an insensitive family. Indeed, the facets of his accomplishment are many, and although this book is not equal to the 1942 edition of the "Selected Works," it is fairly suggestive of his story-telling powers. If there is nothing here to compare with the classic stature of "The Devil and Daniel Webster," "Johnny Pye and the Fool Killer," "The King of the Cats," or "Too Early Spring," nevertheless the stories all have the stamp of the serious and expert craftsman who has something to say, something that evokes pretty deep responses in the intelligent and compassionate human being. They are all worth reading.

The few brief poems seem to me somewhat undistinguished, with the exception of "If This Should Change" and "Little Testament." These show depth of prophetic feeling as well as Benét's gift for making his own thought and experience poetically valid to the reader.

In summary, then, "The Last Circle" is a collection of its writer's minor work, but a collection which echoes the strong affection for humanity that is the dominant note in all his writings.

Much in Little

SANTA CLAUS. A MORALITY. By E. E. Cummings. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1946. 18 *pp.* $1.50.

Reviewed by JOHN WOODBURN

IT LIES on my desk, this comely, slender book, with its red-and-black cover, simple and arresting, its calm, sensitive Weiss type, and its worthy paper—eighteen pages from a first-rate mind. It is called "Santa Claus: A Morality," and it is by E. E. Cummings, a writer of importance and disdainful integrity. As a morality play it is in the pure, traditional form, and as the work of E. E. Cummings it is clear, lyric, and colloquial. It has also the anger and comprehension which he brought in freshness to his earlier writing, and which

he has never allowed to work for anyone but himself. At eight and one-third cents a page, the book is a seductive, unbelievable bargain, a bargain of which, I bitterly predict, a very large number of people will not avail themselves.

It is sometimes as difficult to translate a simplicity as to reduce a complexity, and the Doric design of the morality play is particularly resistant to paraphrase. Allegory is by nature so vulnerable to parody that its dignity, which is one of its essentials, must be constantly protected in any re-telling. So, being aware of this, I shall warily write that this play has five characters: Death, Santa Claus, Mob, Woman, and Child. Of these Death and Santa Claus are the paired protagonists. Death parades a benevolent cynicism which is at times close to Charity; Santa Claus is the bewildered Man of Faith, in search of understanding, that he may bring it, a daily Christmas gift, to others; the Child is intuitive Innocence; the Woman, Love. The Mob is, of course, Active Ignorance, the most dangerous thing in the world. When Death and Santa Claus exchange masks at Death's sardonic suggestion, the Mob does not detect the masquerade, although the Child perceives it through the antennae of innocence and the

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Woman finally, joyously penetrates the disguise. This structure is thickly, exquisitely fronded with irony and bitter wisdom, and the bells of Cummings's lyric poetry ring out over and through the plangent challenge of the theme.

As I would give you a note on a pitch-pipe, this is the way the book begins:

Death. Something wrong, brother?
Santa Claus. Yes.
Death. Sick?
Santa Claus. Sick at heart.
Death. What seems to be the trouble? Come—speak out.
Santa Claus. I have so much to give; and nobody will take.
Death. My problem is also one of distribution, only it happens to be the other way round.

And for a *largo* movement:

Death. You're speaking of a true or actual world. Imagine, if you can, a world so blurred that its inhabitants are one another—an idiotic monster of negation: so timid, it would rather starve itself eternally than run the risk of choking; so greedy, nothing satisfies its hunger but always huger quantities of nothing—a world so lazy that it cannot dream; so blind, it worships its own ugliness: a world so false, so trivial, so unso, phantoms are solid by comparison. But no—you can't imagine such a world.

And *andante; triste:*

Woman. Knowledge has taken love out of the world and all the world is empty empty empty: men are not men any more in all the world for a man who cannot love is not a man, and only a woman in love can be a woman; and, from their love alone, joy is born—joy! Knowledge has taken love out of the world and all the world is joyless joyless joyless. Come, Death! for I have lost my joy and I have lost my love and I have lost myself.

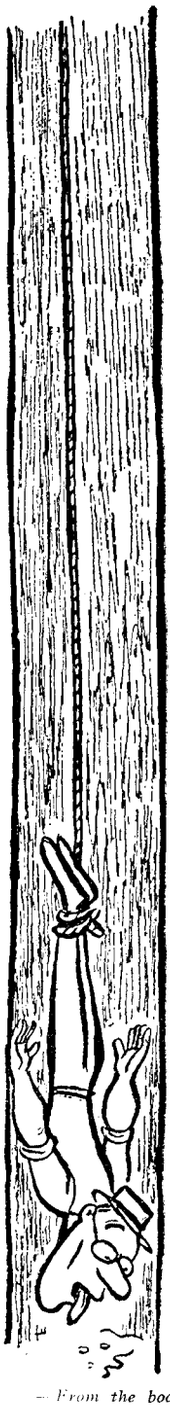
This is, I believe, as brief a book as the coming year will see published. It is also, in its vistas, its chain-reactions which extend the mind to overtake the awaiting implication, as long a book as I, or you, will read this year. I would like to send to Mr. Cummings a holiday handful of bay-leaves for having written it, for giving me a Santa Claus whom adults can believe in; and to his publishers a wreath of bright holly, in praise of their taste and conviction. I hope they will take the will for the deed.

A Little Place in the Country

MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE. By Eric Hodgins. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1947. 237 *pp.* $2.75.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM BATES

ERIC HODGINS has written a novel that really is hilariously funny, and like all great comedy it is based in tragedy. It tells the story of an individual pitting his feeble strength against the combined forces of nature, man, and evil at large. Mr. Blandings is Everyman. Not content to let his dream remain safely within the realm of imagination for secret unmaterialized enjoyment, he forces the issue, attempts to bring it into reality, and comes the universal cropper. The wave of laughter that is bound to follow the launching of this novel will have some notes of bitterness within it as each reader recognizes in the predicaments and misadventures of Mr. Blandings disquieting resemblances to his own experiences.



— *From the book.*
The Search for Water.

The Blandings were merely nice city people to begin with and like many other nice city people they dreamed of a little sneak-away in the country where they could escape the sound and fury of the metropolis, for the blessed peace and quiet of country. Starting out with the modest idea of a little home to cost around fifteen thousand dollars they end with a money-devouring monster for which they have already paid over fifty thousand dollars with liens, mortgages, and loans still hanging thick from the uninsulated roof. They entered upon their adventure in country living with the best will in the world, full of neighborly affection and community *esprit de corps;* they come out of the initial encounter marked as vicious interlopers accused of vandalism, architectural insensibility, and sharp practices.

Mr. and Mrs. Blandings found the exact spot for their ideal home high on the side of Bald Mountain. The exact spot, that is, where necessary water lay farthest from the surface to be coaxed into plumbing pipes only after days of tragic drilling at four dollars and fifty cents a foot. And when you dig 297 feet before you get even a trickle of honest old H_2O the bill is exactly one thousand, three hundred and thirty-six dollars and fifty cents. The exact spot, too, where the foundations run into a solid ledge of rock that has to be blasted away with the aid of an army of workmen, a fleet of trucks, and expensive accessories. The very spot also from which the one blot on the mountain view is clearly visible.

The book abounds in villains. The real estate man, the original owner, the local bankers, the First and Second Lamps of Architecture, Mr. Tesander who drilled for water, Mr. Zucca the dynamiter, the old man with the dead chicken, Mr. Perlasky the house wrecker, Fred Apollonio the construction engineer, the patronizing Blandings offspring, and many, many others. Characters spring from the mind of Eric Hodgins as spontaneously as do plots and counter plots. Characters real and riotous. Mr. William Steig has impaled them with diabolical accuracy in his drawings for their story.

One of the minor difficulties about trying to review a book of this sort is that it just can't be done. The humor lies in the warp and woof of the thing and can't be lifted out in neat little exerpts or indicated by a series of anecdotes. The Blandings are people you will want to know and the way to get acquainted with them is to meet on their own ground at Surrogate Acres. Don't miss the battle of the Blandings *vs.* the Bald Mountaineers.

It is a pleasure to report that Mr. Blandings is permitted a brief, if illusional, happy ending. The last we see of him is in his sleep. There he lies with a beatified Steig smile upon his lips. Why? "He was dreaming that his house was on fire."

Isabel Bishop, prominent New York City painter, is the first woman to be named an officer of the board by the National Institute of Arts and Letters. She was elected a vice president at last month's election.

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HATING WAR IS NOT ENOUGH

THERE is an unconnected and unfinished quality about much of the recent literature on the war. Too many books and poems are apparently written out of the conviction that all that is needed to end war is to describe it, to make people uncomfortable when they read about it. As after the First World War, there is under way a tremendous artistic outpouring against the horrors of war. You pick up "War Is No Damn Good," by R. Osborn, and see page after page of bitter, searing drawings—raw satire and commentary on the futility of authorized mass murder. You pick up "Casualty," by Robert Lowry, and read of convulsive misery and death in battle and behind the lines. You read a new poem by Alfred Kreymborg—eloquent, powerful, piercing—showing war as a naked and festering corpse.

You read all this, and you are moved. But there is nothing new about it, nothing that you haven't read before, nothing that hasn't already been said with as much or more energy and passion. From Homer to Hemingway there is a solid carpet of books describing war, in Tolstoy's phrase, as "a terrible, an atrocious thing." If there is any field of human error that has been adequately mirrored and condemned in the world's literature, it is war.

But it is not for want of originality that we are concerned over the direction being taken by the current anti-war novels and poems. Restatement and reiteration of valid themes is a legitimate and essential function of literature. Our complaint is rather that it is not enough to generate and intensify a hate of war in order to end war. It is not enough to shudder over word or line pictures of bloated bodies floating up on a beach, or of maggoted corpses piled up like cordwood. All the poetic fervor in the world against war will not abolish war if men do not understand how wars begin and how peace must be made. Indeed, it has happened that a sense of horror alone may actually be part of a drift towards war. Never before in history was there such a grandiose campaign to make people literate about the horrors of war as existed in this country during the period from 1919 to 1939. Hemingway, Dos Passos and Remarque were only a few of the novelists who contributed to what amounted to a national conviction that if only we could squirm enough, we would never again have to fight. Almost every magazine carried, as a public service, advertisements of World Peaceways with its driving messages on the insanity of war.

But the war came anyway, not only in spite of our anti-war literature, but perhaps to some extent because of it. Apparently Mr. Hemingway and World Peaceways failed to convince Adolf Hitler. Or, if they convinced him of anything, it was that we were too busy hating war, too frightened of war itself, to give any thought or effort to stopping it.

Again, today, too many writers are viewing war as a thing apart, as an isolated phenomenon of horror—completely detached from causes and implications. There seems to be a slipping away in our memories of why and how Hitlerism happened and how it was that we were brought into the war. There is a revulsion against the symbols and the trappings of war, and once again the feeling is gaining ground that we have only to bury our weapons to preserve and insure the peace.

But just getting the tools of war out of sight is not enough. Disarmament is not the answer. Neither is armament. The first offers no protection against aggression and may in fact incite it; the second tends to make war inevitable as the frictions generated by mounting competitive stockpiles of explosives becomes incendiary. The answer, if there is an answer, must lie in the direction of establishing an authority which takes away from nations, summarily and completely, not only the machinery of battle that can wage war, but the machinery of decision that can start a war.

Until such time as the United Nations is strengthened into an organization from which no state can withdraw or secede under any circumstances; until its decisions are made compulsory and binding; until it has authority over the individual in limited and well-defined areas relating to mutual security, such as atomic weapons and all weapons adapted to mass destruction—until then, we shall be without even the minimal equipment necessary to prevent war. Such equipment will not automatically destroy all of the roots of conflict, but it may at least dispose of the shoots until such time as we can build not merely a structure of precaution and prevention, but a structure of justice.

N. C.

Persephone and the Ploughman

By Henry John Firley

WITH Persephone's scarf in his hands the fall ploughman
was awed by her veil caught on the landscape brier.
Purple tide of the elderberry and outline of the folded wind
filled with the summer warmth of full corn
were pressed in the folds of the veil.

The lanced vein of the sumach clotted its crimson;
the half-ring of a wet moon had washed silk in the rainbow weave.
The scarf was stained with the blood of pollen
and scented with shaded fern and leaf smoke of Indian summer,
the flying gossamere season of the south-falling sun.

The flaming passion of seed has scorched
a russet foliage design on the scarf
edged with brown fingerprints of roadside stones
and sepia half-tones of trees
slightly blocked on a white thundershower.

Tucking Persephone's scarf in his heart the ploughman
left the unfinished furrows to the moist after-sun
haze of powdery cornmeal dusting the moon.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sense of the Meeting

SIR: Hidden in the provocative article "A Beginning for Sanity" is a most timely comment on the conduct of business meetings.

The significance of the review is enhanced by the background which the reviewers presented for a serious consideration of the Lilienthal report. Based on the same confidential inside information with which the commentators of our age supply listeners and readers, they revealed that "at the very first meeting the group agreed the subject was too important to be subjected to the hazards of the push-and-pull of the committee approach." So they talked about semantics and dialectics, group discussion, the art of persuasion, and group decision. They decided to listen and consider rather than propose and exhort each other. "We were not going to get into the usual type of barter system, trading off one pet idea against another, getting into committee 'deals' just for the sake of carrying off individual honors." They would not compromise on a watered-down report just for the sake of *a* report. Then the reviewers concluded this part of their article with the comment that "it may seem that there is nothing very remarkable about all this and that such an approach should be taken for granted. Yet anyone familiar with the workings of the average government committee . . . will appreciate how really remarkable and worthy of emulation were the Lilienthal committee's techniques."

What we need in business, in government, in all group activity today is more experience and practice in getting the *sense of the meeting*. That is the testing point in the working of the democratic process. Reaching decisions is one of the most important of all the techniques in learning to live together. The most fascinating political institutions perhaps in the whole world are the Swiss Landesgemeinde Cantons. There we have pure democracy in government. The New England Town Meeting is another example of group thinking and deciding on the basis of pure democratic principles. We realize too seldom that the Quaker way of life has made as distinct a contribution in the creative conduct of business and group relationships as it has in the conduct of the meeting for business.

In a Quaker business meeting the clerk gathers the sense of the meeting and frames it into a minute adopted then and there which satisfies minorities as well as majority opinion. This principle is being used more and more in the conduct of everyday business, especially by boards of directors. Morris Llewellyn Cooke, experienced management engineer and one of the leaders in the field of scientific management, gives as his considered judgment that "the Quaker method of reaching decisions by taking what they call 'the sense of the meeting' as contrasted with voting represents a wide departure from rugged individualism. It is a process inviting continuing development. The adoption of this practice generally in the affairs of men would make for a new world."

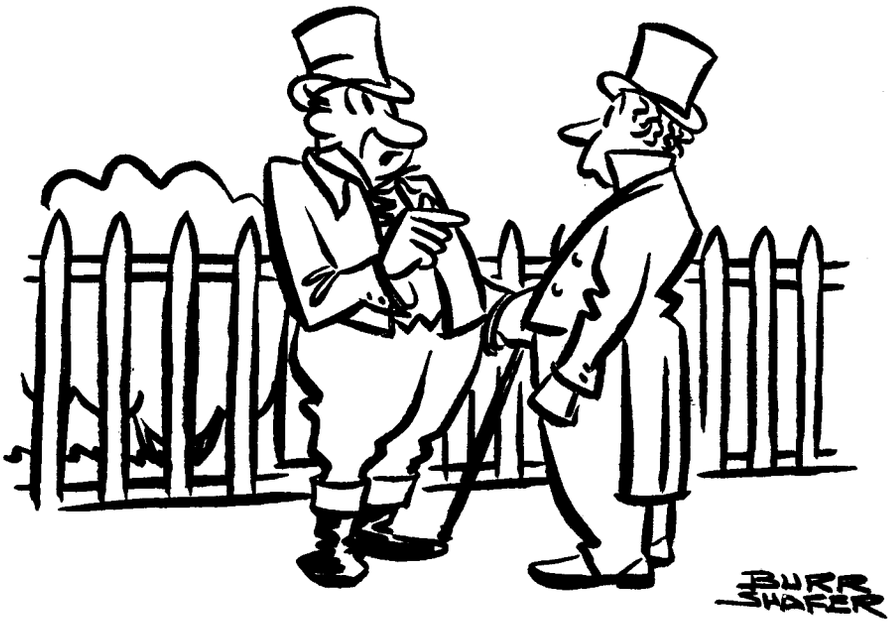
Mary P. Follett in her books on government and business believes that this method of reaching decisions is of the nature of the creative experience we must achieve if we are to live together in a world of conflicting ideologies and points of view. *The Churchman* magazine, an independent journal published to promote the application of the spirit and ethics of Jesus to every relationship of the social order, in its July 1946 issue editorially commented with approval on the point made above by Norman Cousins and Thomas Finletter by saying, "We know that the voice of the Christian church could be made far more effective if more of our commissions and committees could be induced to follow the example cited."

Here is a method tested in church affairs, in business, in local town and in state government. It could now be used in the affairs of the world's government. The slowing up of the work of the United Nations because of the veto principle of voting makes it imperative that something should be done. The importance of unity among the large and the small nations is recognized as a *sine qua non* of success for the feasibility of the United Nations as a way to conduct the world's business. Trygve Lie has submitted some proposals for speeding up the work of the General Assembly. One of them is, "Wherever appropriate the main committees should be encouraged to establish, at their first or second meeting, subcommittees of ten to fifteen members to study various questions referred to them by the committee and to report back to it. In order that these subcommittees may meet simultaneously, each subcommittee should have its own chairman." These proposals, in fact all modern living, mean more and not less committees. Plainly the desideratum is some new method of conducting business creatively. What we need is a combination of free discussion and quiet thinking which will develop a group willingness to accept unanimously the balanced judgment of the majority and the best informed. The sense of the meeting then will be consensus. We must learn to accommodate divergent views into common understanding so that all can act with integrity, self-respect and sympathetic understanding whenever we meet to do business together.

RICHMOND P. MILLER.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Richmond P. Miller is field secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Copies of a bibliography "Selected Readings on the Quaker Method of Conducting Business Meetings" are available gratis from 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia 2.



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"Another thing about buying this Western territory—it'll be a good place to have Presidential candidates from."

Hymns of Hale

SIR: Has language nothing better
Than the current phrase "It stinks"?
This blast that's hurled by critics
Is the thing that stinks, methinks.

MAUDE A. GORANOFF.

Fairbanks, Alaska.

SIR: I can think of nothing worse
Than those who hymn their hate in verse!

G. G.

San Diego, Calif.

SIR: Teacher's all right—but I insist
I don't like "educationist"!

KATHARINE GRACE WALDEIGH.

Toronto, Can.

SIR: Two remarks that we abhor,
Please don't use them anymore;
"And we quote"; "Forever more."

D. & M. FLYNN.

Utica, N. Y.

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Seeing Things

CHILDREN OF SKELT

READER, does the name Skelt mean nothing to you? Does it leave your heart unquickened; your eyes unfilled with images, gaudy but delightful, and delightful because gaudy? And does this beginning of mine, this daring to address you directly as "Reader," this tossing of questions at you just as if you could answer back before another sentence comes your way, strike you as an affectation?

Do you resent this use of "Reader" (there, you see—another question) because it is as out of fashion as gas light, bustles, or whiskers Dundreary? Its passing is to be regretted. Count it among the lost amenities; as one of time's harmless victims. It is a good and friendly form, as Hazlitt knew and all his admirers realize. "Reader, have you ever seen a fight?" he dared to ask halfway through a magnificent essay in a paragraph Gene Tunney has by heart. "If not," continued Hazlitt, "you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate."

If "Reader" as so employed is an archaic form, that is my present reason for returning to it. Blame Skelt for this; Skelt and Webb, Redington and Pollock. If their names are unknown to you, add Alfred Lunt's to the list. His will shed light, especially if you have been lucky enough to see his latest production. No. I don't mean "O Mistress Mine" at the Empire. I mean the no less joyful, though less sophisticated, show Mr. Lunt is staging in three rooms on the third floor of the Museum of the City of New York. Mr. Lunt in a museum—already? Should these preliminaries leave you in the dark even now, think back to Robert Louis Stevenson, and the chapter in his "Memories and Portraits" called "A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured."

Mull over that title. It should lift the fog for you. At least it should cause a far-away bell to tinkle, if not to ring. For a penny plain and twopence colored is what they cost. I am thinking, of course, of those wondrous sheets, those packages of sheer joy and irresistible temptation, those papers bulging with actors, properties, and settings, for the possession of which children in the nineteenth century were separated from their coppers.

Once saved for (a pleasant privation), once selected (a terrible agony), these paradisaical packets were to be carried home along with the text of the melodrama for the staging of which they were designed. Then, they were to be colored (sheer ecstasy) by those adventurous young owners who were neither so low nor so lazy as to stoop to purchasing the twopenny kind which were already more prismatic than the rainbow. Next, they were to be cut out. Then, mounted. Yes, and finally displayed before an audience of dutiful parents, coerced domestics, and envious contemporaries, behind the proscenium arch—complete with musicians and occupied boxes—of a toy theatre.

No wonder Stevenson called these sheets of "Juvenile Drama" for which Skelt and his successors were responsible "bundles of delight." Or that visitors to the three rooms now darkened (but, oh, so full of light) on the top floor of the Museum of the City of New York should surrender to the spell of this collection of nineteenth-century toy theatres which Mr. Lunt has lovingly collected and lovingly displayed. For, in the presence of this collection, a wonderful and welcome thing can be rediscovered. This is the lost innocence of childhood; with its imagination untamed by the dull oppression of facts, with its love for the violent and the incredible still hot, and its dream-world happily crowded with barbarous but enchanting visions. Not unnaturally, this lost innocence of childhood turns out to be the theatre's own lost innocence.

—Vandamm Studio.

In Alfred Lunt's nineteenth-century toy theatres, "lovingly collected . . . a wonderful thing can be rediscovered."

Stevenson confesses that, out of all the years of his life, one, and only one, home-coming brought him the delights he knew when he would steal upstairs with one of these nursery dramas under his arm. This other joy came one night when he brought back with him a fat, old, double-columned copy of "The Arabian Nights." In linking the realm of Skelt and his clan with "The Arabian Nights" Stevenson did more than recall a personal pleasure. He defined the very nature and magic of the exhibition Mr. Lunt has brought together.

Without Skelt and company we might never have had "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," or "The Master of Ballantrae." In their beguiling way these novels are only Skeltery housebroken, grown-up, turned self-conscious, but raised into art so that the dross is lost and the pure gold glitters. For Stevenson worshipped the very name of Skelt—"so stagey and piratical." As a boy reared in Scotland, he knew Skeltdom long before he visited England. When at last he crossed the border, he says it was only to come home to Skelt.

"What am I? what are life, art, letters, the world, but what my Skelt has made them?" wrote Stevenson. "He stamped himself upon my immaturity. The world was plain before I knew him, a poor penny world; but soon it was all coloured with romance." As a grown man, if Stevenson went to the theatre to see a good old melodrama, he found that what he saw was only Skelt a little faded. If he visited a bold scene in nature, he knew that Skelt would have been bolder.

"Indeed," says he, "out of this cut-and-dry, dull, swaggering, obtrusive and infantile art, I seem to have learned the very spirit of my life's enjoyment." From the rude cuts for these toy theatres, Stevenson admits, he acquired a gallery of scenes and characters with which, in the silent theatre of his brain, he might "enact all novels and romances." From them he derived "an enduring and transforming pleasure."

The transforming pleasure R. L. S. found in Skeltduggery continues to be transforming in Mr. Lunt's fine collection. It remains so even for those of us never privileged in our childhood to invest our savings in these penny - plain - and - twopence - colored passports to delirium.

Most children have owned toy the-

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THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTIONS

The Musical Hit
CAROUSEL
Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2d
Directed by ROUBEN MAMOULIAN
Dances by AGNES de MILLE
with John Raitt, Iva Withers, Jean Darling, Eric Mattson, John Conte, Jean Casto, Alice Tobin
MAJESTIC W. 44th St. Mats. Thurs. & Sat.

The Musical Hit
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Based on Lynn Riggs' "Green Grow the Lilacs"
Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2nd
Directed by ROUBEN MAMOULIAN
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Harold Keel • Mary Hatcher • David Burns • Ruth Weston
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HOWARD LINDSAY & RUSSEL CROUSE
STATE OF THE UNION
1946 Pulitzer Prize Play
Produced by LELAND HAYWARD
★ New York—Hudson Theatre
★ Chicago—Blackstone Theatre
★ Los Angeles—Biltmore Theatre

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in
Lady Windermere's Fan
by OSCAR WILDE
with Penelope Ward • David Manners
John Buckmaster • Rex Evans • Rex O'Malley
and ESTELLE WINWOOD
Staged by Cecil Beaton—Directed by Jack Minster
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Evgs. at 8:40 Mats. Wed. & Sat. at 2:40

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Directed by MR. LUNT
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atres. Certainly, every adult (in age only) who remains stagestruck when he does grow up MUST in his youth have had a playhouse in the attic. It is part of each theatre-worker's legend. It is one of the indispensable items in the autobiography of all those spending their lives near the footlights. What toy soldiers are to a future general; what the Bible was to Lincoln; what a miracle is to a saint, miniature theatres are to those who flutter like moths around the candle of "The Profession."

I DO not have in mind the poor, shrunken examples of juvenile stagecraft which at present can be bought at the more expensive toy shops. These do nothing for the imagination—except congeal it. They are intended only for poor little rich boys and girls who are fated to grow up into bankers, Brass Hats, brokers, lawyers, teachers, social workers, and mere practical and useful citizens. Though blessed with a proscenium arch and blood-red curtains, with wood wings and back drops and non-Equity actors for the production of such pale stuff as "Little Red Riding Hood," these new-fangled toy theatres have as much relation to the tribe of Skelt or his French counterparts as a Greek bootblack bears to Homer.

Denied Skeltery, the truly stagestruck in this land and century were left to their own juvenile devices. They could not purchase a fairyland of make-believe and romance. They had to create it—for themselves and by themselves. In fact, Mr. Lunt did not assemble his present exhibition until, during the war years, he found himself playing in a London which Miss Fontanne and he had conquered. Most American youngsters born since McKinley have been compelled to make their own attic theatres—in Mr. Lunt's fashion. Not so well as he did, as his exhibition makes clear. The settings and costumes he painted at the ripe age of eleven for "Julius Caesar," "Twelfth Night," or "The Winter's Tale" clearly mark him as a child bound to be someone in the theatre. The Messrs. Skelt, Webb, Redington, and Pollock, however, provided those born in Britain in the last century with a fairyland that was readymade. It is this same fairyland into which Mr. Lunt allows us to wander at the Museum.

Did Emerson call snow frozen architecture? Well, here on that third floor are three rooms of frozen theatre. Not cold, mind you. Anything except that. Hot to the boiling point. Melodramas caught at their most purple peaks of climax; big scenes impaled for all time in the full hocus-pocus tide of their

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Production directed by ROBERT H. GORDON
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passions; and "stills," so to speak, of gloriously tawdry moments which refuse even now to be still.

Here is a world of apotheoses; of wounded duelists quitting in spirit (with the aid of visible wires) their wounded bodies for the pearly clouds above; and of a Robinson Crusoe and a Friday who face, in the wildest wilds God or geology ever fashioned, a group of friendly Indians dressed in Roman togas and sporting Roman shields.

IT is a nightmare world in which the more frightening is the nightmare the more cherished it is as a dream. In it you will find the serpents, spirits, and peasants of "Der Freischütz." And Aztec temples for Pizarro, all of which Queen Victoria could have designed. You will discover, too, such notables as Wellington, the Prince of Orange, General Blucher, and Napoleon fighting "A Battle of Waterloo" which, though bloody as only paint can make it, blessedly finds the discharging guns and cannons more silent than a Christmas mouse. And Bill Sykes and Nancy in the fearsome shadows of the bridge. Or a flash-colored windmill for "The Miller and His Men" in the most terrible state of permanent explosion. Or Eliza dashing without moving across the immobile ice with static bloodhounds in eternal pursuit. And Mazeppa strapped to a mad stallion who races without advancing across a cataract that is wet without being damp.

There are plenty of other exhibits —"Timour or the Tartar," "The Silver Palace," "The Forty Thieves," "The Maid and the Magpie," "Robin Hood," and "Three-Fingered Jack." Their colors are as violent as the stories they tell. Their outlines, even when nature is their model, are contours which nature has not yet achieved. They belong to an era of make-believe in which we must make believe in order to believe at all. Yet their enchantment is genuine.

Perhaps it is just as well that all of their actors are silent. For us, in this different age, the words they ought to be speaking would break the spell. We would recognize these words as balderdash, fit only for the snickers of spoof revivals. Being trained in the theatre of a new period, we would judge what we were hearing as literature and not accept it merely as theatre. Accordingly, our ears would reject those very excesses upon which our eyes feed with such great delight in the visual kingdom of Skelt.

Our theatre is supposedly a playwright's theatre. Ibsen and Shaw and a host of others have sought to intel-

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lectualize it. They have turned their backs on the old claptrap. They have endeavored to make it literate, sophisticated, adult. But, though much has been gained, as is the way of things, in the process something has also been lost. It is this something—this frenzied, unthinking, vernal excitement—which can be recaptured in all its vibrant and blessed tawdriness in Mr. Lunt's collection of nineteenth-century juvenilia.

Being good theatre in itself no less than a good theatrical exhibition, Mr. Lunt's show possesses a villain. His name is Charles Kean. At first glance his villainies may seem mild enough. Not inappropriately, the younger Kean is to be found lurking in a corner. It is there that you will find the sketches for "The Winter's Tale" as he produced it at the Princess Theatre in 1856. Although they are agreeable to look at, do not be deceived by their pastoral appearance. For they and Kean were the congenital enemies of Skelt.

KEAN had an accurate mind, a commodity with which Skelt was not cursed. William Shakespeare embarrassed Kean. He could not forgive Shakespeare for having "left the incidents of 'The Winter's Tale' alternating between Sicily and Bohemia without assigning any specific date to the time of action." Kean was horrified to find that, chronologically, contradictions abounded in Shakespeare's text, inasmuch, as he put it, as reference is made to the Delphic oracle, Christian burial, an Emperor of Russia, and an Italian painter of the sixteenth century. Being a logical man, Kean was convinced that, "when an attempt is made to combine truth with history, conflicting epochs cannot all be illustrated." Accordingly, he placed the play in a period of his own choice, and substituted Bithynia for Bohemia. This allowed him to represent the costumes of the inhabitants of Asia Minor at that time.

What is more, Kean was aided scenically in his production by such grave worthies as George Goodwin, Esq., F.R.S. And George Scharf, Esq., Jun., F.S.A., who, Mr. Kean tells us, was the author of the "Handbook to the Greek and Pompeian Courts at the Crystal Palace." Worse still, Mr. Scharf reproduced in his settings "the vegetation peculiar to Bithynia . . . adapted from his private drawings, taken on the spot."

Needless to say, Reader, though no one guessed it then, this was the beginning of the end. At least for Skelt and his tribe. Thereafter realism was on its way.

JOHN MASON BROWN.

Accent on Fascism

SHADOW OVER THE LAND. By Charles Dworskin. New York: The Beechhurst Press, Inc. 1946. 286 pp. $2.75.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

TO New London, Conn.—a semi-imaginary New London, Conn. —comes Tom Bonet, an officer of "Patriots United." The war is about over, and that national organization, plainly fascist in its ideology, its corruption, and its methods, tries to fish in the troubled post-war waters. Right in the household of Dan Fleming, Tom's friend of earlier days, the bewilderment of those weeks has made its inroads; and Dan's veteran son is caught by "Patriots United" in no time.

It's quite a story Mr. Dworskin, an enviably young writer, has cut out for himself. He handles it with élan and much skill in the first part of his book. The tragedy of Susan, Paul's sister, and her affair with the fascist scoundrel is treated with delicacy and a remarkable lack of bawdiness. If the rest of the novel and its denouement fails to live up to that level, it is chiefly the fault of a counter-organization of men and women of good will introduced by the author. The role which Dan Fleming's third child, an adolescent boy, plays in that set-up too much recalls the smart kid of the movies; in the closing passages you can almost hear the audience clap hands at the villain's punishment at the hand of the straightforward youngster.

The Fleming family has paid a heavy price for Dan's old acquaintance with Tom Bonet. Paul has been killed by the gangster henchmen of "Patriots United" the moment he threatens to fall out of line. Susan will never be the same again. The parents' hopes rest on Harold, the boy, now.

With all its youthful shortcomings, "Shadow Over the Land" must be called—no letters to the editor, please, about "reviewords"!—a promising first novel. It is pathetic, though, how remote its subject appears, and how far outstripped by events moving in a different direction. Fascinated by communist dangers, public opinion has all but forgotten the Fascists and would-be Fascists in our midst. "Shadow Over the Land," then, naïve as it is on the whole, comes as a welcome reminder.

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

THE POETS SPEAK OF LOVE

This week's quiz consists of twenty familiar quotations on the subject of love. Allowing 5 points for each one you can identify, a score of 60 is par, 70 is very good, and 80 or better is excellent. Answers on page 29.

1. Come live with me and be my love.
2. Four be the things I'd been better without:
   Love, curiosity, freckles, and doubt.
3. I could not love thee, dear, so much loved I not honour more.
4. If love were what the rose is, and I were like the leaf,
   Our love would grow together in sad or singing weather.
5. If thou must love me, let it be for nought
   Except for love's sake only.
6. If you love me as I love you, we'll both be friendly and untrue.
7. In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.
8. Love conquers all things; let us yield to love.
9. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds.
10. Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;
    'Tis woman's whole existence.
11. My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.
12. O, love, love, love! Love is like a dizziness;
    It winna let a poor body gang about his biziness!
13. Out upon it! I have loved three whole days together
    And am like to love three more, if it prove fair weather.
14. Pity melts the mind to love.
15. The course of true love never did run smooth.
16. 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.
17. To know her was to love her.
18. We loved with a love that was more than love.
19. Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?
20. Write me as one who loves his fellow man.

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French Poets in English

YOUNG CHERRY TREES SECURED AGAINST HARES. By André Breton. New York: View Editions. 1946. 52 *pp.* $3.75.

FRUIT FROM SATURN. By Yvan Goll. Brooklyn: Hemispheres Editions. 1946. 53 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by JEREMY INGALLS

EDOUARD RODITI has translated, from among the poems of André Breton, selections representing Breton's work from 1923 to 1944. This volume provides both the Breton originals and Roditi's English versions. Presenting the meditations of the "classic" surrealist over the past twenty years, Roditi's renderings are both accurate and sensitive.

The one poem which Roditi presents rather less successfully is the "Fata Morgana," which Breton labels a "fragment." The difficulty here is so major a problem in all translation that the translator cannot be seriously censured for not surmounting it. A refrain phrase in the second half of the poem, a phrase which recurs in every one of the twenty-one lines, reads, in the original, "momie d'ibis." Rendered into English as "mummified ibis," the shift in vowel effects turns the original hypnotic incantation into a tiresome device. Except in this passage, however, Roditi's scrupulosity in retaining order of images, nearly identical constructions and line-lengths, serves him well in these translations of rather difficult material.

These poems, depending as they do upon incantation, sound so ordered as to induce hallucination on the route to deeper vision; it is fortunate that the originals are available facing each page of translation. The images can be transferred; the dream-world tone cannot be transferred. Without Breton's particular interplays of sound and sense, the juxtapositions of images are necessarily somewhat rigid and stark.

Like all the surrealists, Breton, their great Mage, repeats with variety to which there is no calculable limit, the sense impressions colliding in the private consciousness. His materials are selected according to a code in which a mystical preoccupation with assents and conflicts in sex represents reality. Poetry, reality, and freedom are recovered, according to Breton and his precursors and followers, through their basic and mystical formula. To suggest that Esclarmonde who goes to recover the edelweiss, Esclarmonde, the ideal figure of Breton's concluding poem, is an illusion less powerful than

the romantic illusions of a century past, to suggest that it depends upon an overspecialized view of experience, is to challenge the premises of the surrealists as artists and philosophers. Assuming it unfair to challenge premises and fair only to consider results, it remains that Breton continues his wizardy of language and, within the limits of his view, renders, with engine-purring energy, report of the fact that "everything is much more closely interconnected" and, according to definition, the fact that the world runs on sympathy and love.

In the six poems which function as a sequence under the title, "Fruit from Saturn," Yvan Goll meditates, in English verse, upon the significance of Uranium 235. Like the work of André Breton, this too is the work of a mystic among poets. Though they occasionally use similar materials, the premises underlying the choice of materials are different; the verse structure is very different; and, in consequence, the resultant works are, in genre, at least half a world apart. In an old dichotomy still existing among mystics, Breton may be called a Dionysian and Goll, a Pythagorean.

For the purposes of his art Goll employs such signs for generalizing on human experience as the numbers of the Tarot pack, Raziel's seventy names for God, the mystery of circles from the rings of Saturn to the roundness of the peach and of the eye, the world of wheels and the rose of light. The anti-mystical mind must exert effort to see relations between the substance extracted from pitchblende or carnotite and the whole history of man's loves and fears, to go:

> Past Delphi's tripod and cathedral domes
> Pythagoras's revolving harmonies
> Past Bruno's pyre and Einstein's time

in order to come at last to the significance of:

> The seven-colored ray
> Bursting from dying Self
> The Infinite raped in Alamogordo.

Nevertheless, of all the consciously timely essays at treating, in verse, the significance of the now broached atomic era, it seems to me that the premises employed by Yvan Goll have a wisdom the validity of which is at least equal to that of those who appraise the era from a more narrowly pragmatic view.

What Goll has to say is that history is the process of climbing the Tree of Knowledge. Whether by way of details in political history or by way of discoverable factors in the structure of atoms, the process is still one process, history in its broadest subjective sense:

> Until the central atom splits
> Making my eye the sun of all the worlds.

Yvan Goll's method is the method of the old myth-makers, turning the images of the known world into a new symbolic structure, representing "how the world is made." He knows that all factors entering history radically affect the imagination's grasp of history. In his own technique, as does André Breton in his rather different technique, Yvan Goll exercises a true poetic function, the function of the poet as seer.

Prayer Poems

INITIATE THE HEART. By Sister M. Maura, S.S.N.D. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1946. 46 *pp.* $1.75.

Reviewed by MARNIE BACON

THIS is a volume of devotional poems by a nun. Written with much feeling and some skill, they give an insight into a sensitive and delicately balanced mind and its adjustment to and acceptance of a way of life unfamiliar to most of us. This form is on the whole conventional.

Sister Maura writes her quatrains with grace. She takes one or two fliers into the more usual media of modern verse but she is at her best when she is most simple and when she tries least to clothe her sincerity in the mantle of intellectual analysis. The simple prayers for the refugees, for persons of all faiths, included generously in her poetry, will find sympathetic readers everywhere. There is no doubt that the content of her poems comes overwhelmingly first in her eyes and every artistic consideration gives place to what she considers to be the truth and value of her statement.

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A DIFFIDENT PHILOSOPHER

(*Continued from page 8*)

in human speech, even in the most artful human speech, ultimately to say only one thing at a time, and there are a thousand other aspects of the same fact that any one fragment of discourse can never even broach. Our thinker knew the philosopher's fallacy of being taken in by his own clarities, and the way in which an articulate system blinds the thinker himself to the morasses and obscurities of experience, and its ultimate central blindness or mystery or absurdity.

One could not even be clear without seeing clarity become an idol. It is easy enough, the philosopher thought, to get a reputation for clarity by avoiding or ignoring all the tangled jungles, by detouring round the blind alleys and dead ends of thought. The truth of anything, he knew, was not simple, nor was discourse adequate to the whole of truth.

The philosopher knew that there were plenty of philosophers before him who had seen this. They were driven to arabesques of statement about moments of apocalyptic vision. To be understood even of all literate men in any generation is proof positive that one has uttered only the relatively intelligible half-truths.

Our philosopher realized, more than the ordinary man, how misleading clarities may be, how far from the turbid actuality of experience itself. But what other course was he to use in his speech than the lucidity which for so long he had made his ideal? He could resort, as had been done before, to gnomic utterance, to mystical aphorism. But he hesitated to do this. In the first place, how could one be sure that the flash of insight which welled up within one was not a phosphorescence seen in a fever, a glory wished for in a dream? How could one be sure that a difficult aphorism was not at its core merely a stupid failure in articulation? No, our philosopher could not follow these latter-day ecstatics who thought that the beginning of wisdom was to abandon even the attempt to make sense, to speak in ejaculations. He refused to believe that because one cannot tell the whole truth about anything, and because one cannot tell the whole truth about everything, one cannot tell partial truth about part of the whole of experience. To admit that there is a mystery about the heart of things does not mean that one cannot be clear and convincing about some parts of it, at least, and indeed, within limits, make some part of the world or life or society perfectly in-

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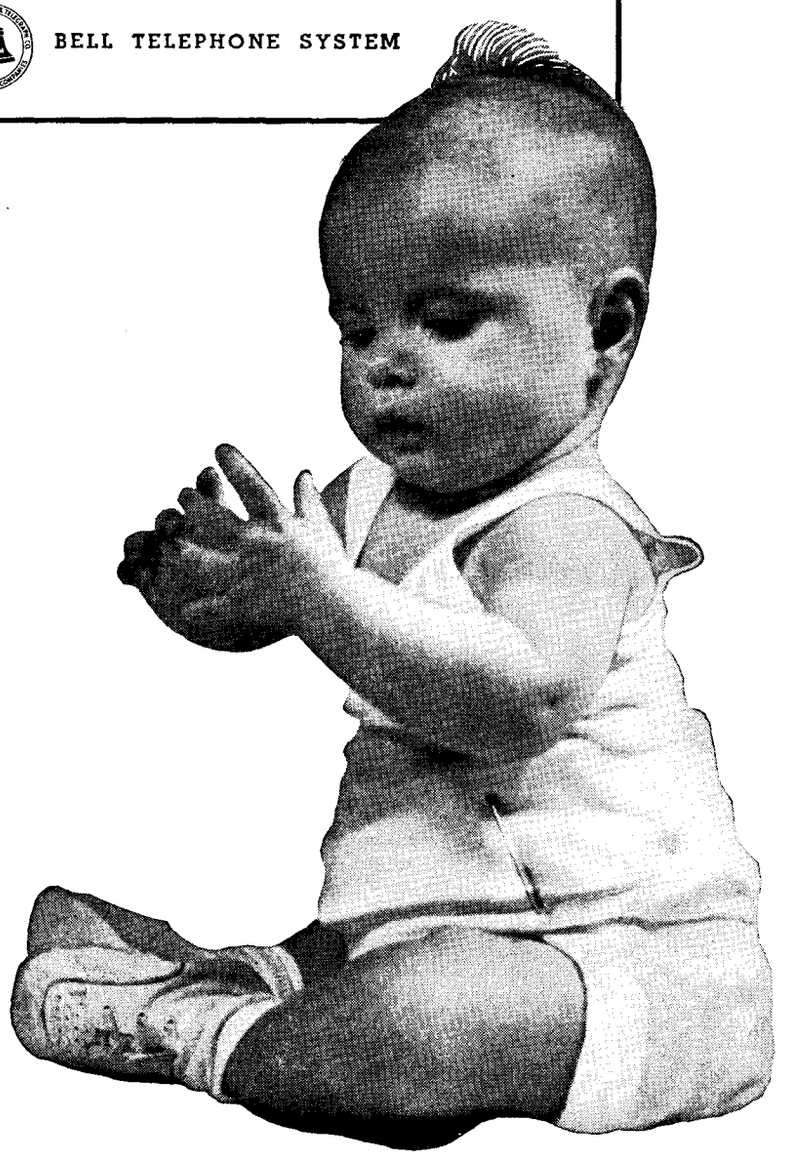

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telligible. Even if one has a flash of vast and cosmic luminosity, the rational mind hates to have its insight converted into a fanaticism of the vague and the vacuous.

Our philosopher felt better now. One could not say the whole truth about the whole universe, but one could say some wholesome and saving things about some of it. He would have rested at that point, content to say what saving and wholesome truths he could think of. But, unfortunately, he was living in the modern world. Like so many of his colleagues and so many of his friends, he had allowed himself to be bedazzled by the complexities of the contemporary scene. He wished rather that he had been born in Greece. It was not that he thought he knew everything, but he knew at least how much there was to be known and of the varieties of knowledge. He noted that there were sages in the modern world who were undismayed by the vast new areas of knowledge, who said that since logic was always the same, and had been so since Aristotle, they did not need to know the sordid irrelevant facts of transient contemporary existence. Our philosopher could not be so careless and innocent of the new avenues of knowledge. If he had been born in early Greece, he could have looked around the world, and said that All is Water, or, like Parmenides, that the All is One. He could only be certain now, so subtle and new were the researches in logic, that even the standards of empirical science were uncertain. Physicists seemed to be doubting their tried formulas, and many scientists were saying that science itself could not tell the truth about reality. He himself had too wide an acquaintance with the literature and arts of the world not to know that there was much truth told that was not dreamed of in any modern scientific philosophy he knew anything about.

Supposing for a moment he had the ear of the whole world, he said to himself, he could not but wish to make his revelation known to the vast listening human race. What was he to tell them? He suspected that not only he, but most others, except a few arrogant modern dialecticians, would be frightened nearly to death. He was not one of those who felt in himself the absolute truth, invented either by himself or borrowed from St. Thomas or Kierkegaard or some other among the illustrious dead. Our philosopher not only knew something about the vast accumulations of modern knowledge. He knew a good deal, too, that the early philosophers of Greece could not have known, about all views of the world current since their day. He was not only a philosopher, but, as the modern phrase runs, a gentleman and a scholar, and he had sufficient sympathy to realize that each of the great classic thinkers had a portion of the truth; that all, in their provincial accents, spoke something of the universal language of the spirit, and spoke fairly accurately about some aspect of experience or nature.

What, then, was he to tell the general public? For our philosopher was a kindly human being and a lonely one, and he could not bear to speak only to himself or to his fellow professionals. Could he go up on a mountain and speak to the multitude, simply to tell them all the doubts which he had arrived at instead of conclusions? That words are treacheries, even the firmest words? He could see the looks of disappointment on their faces turned upward for a revelation. That all philosophies have some truth in them, that each has some window for the soul? But from which window would one see the view that one had been seeking for—the wide and final view of truth? That there is much at the heart of things that cannot be translated into discourse? But what was *that* to tell human beings already overburdened with the weight and importunity of things too confused, too heart-breaking, too brain-taxing, to be said? That no single philosophy is salvation and that perhaps there is no salvation at all? Nothing to go up on a mountain to announce, nothing to tell a multitude who in their unaided hearts already knew these things too well. Here was hardly anything calculated to instigate mankind to a new idealism. Yet, how could one go on feeding the public ideals that one knew in one's self to be illusions? To tell them all was vanity? They could get that from people other than philosophers. They need not turn to philosophers for that at all. They could borrow discouragements from the tired, the defeated, and the cynical, numerous enough in the world of men.

The trouble was (Plato saw it long ago) it was no use to attempt to speak wisely until one, one's self, was wise. But who in the modern world could pretend to even the beginning of wisdom, unless it were the Socratic discovery that wisdom is not of man but of God, and man can only be a lover of wisdom?

Our philosopher was greatly distressed by all these doubts and diffidences about his own profession. He came very near deciding not to be a philosopher at all. If he had had manual gifts, he would have liked to be a craftsman of some sort, some honest workman making a clearly useful, a simply designed, cabinet or tool; he would have liked to be a gardener planting an ultimately visible garden. Or, since he was by nature an intellectual man, he wished he might go into some realm of knowledge where a man might know something precise and definite, and become a respectable authority in some unmistakable realm. A physicist or a chemist could find out things that could be known, and he knew what he knew and when he knew. Even historians, although they were, most of them, short on ideas, could at least claim, with respect to some small area of fact—a given county in New York State in the eighteen-twenties—to know where of they spoke, and have documents to

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place and Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE SILVER LEOPARD *Helen Reilly* (Random: $2.50)	Manhattan portrait-painter's fatal bashing puts Catherine Lister in center of killings past and present. McKee of Homicide Bureau extricates her.	Three murders, some stolen bonds, blighted romance, well-groomed characters, and McKee acting dour and efficient through rapidly moving opus.	Satisfactory
BEAGLE SCENTED MURDER *Frank Gruber* (Rinehart: $2)	Beagle and Peel, poverty-stricken private 'tecs, dig into files for "new business" and come up with murder and plentiful trouble.	Informative icing about dime-novel collectors can't disguise sawdusty content. Unprincipled sleuths bring little new or exciting to reader.	Shoddy
WERE DEATH DENIED *Dornford Yates* (Putnam: $2.50)	"Jonah" Mansel and friend Chandos settle hash of ruthless criminals and rescue lovely but shady lady in Europe between-the-wars.	Sticky ends of various human reptiles grimly maneuvered by adroit and resourceful Britishers after much thrill-some dashing around French countryside.	Nostalgic thriller

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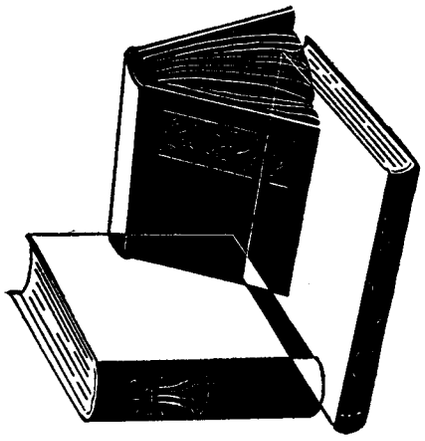
prove it. What could a philosopher claim to know? And if wisdom was his specialty, on what basis could he claim to be wise?

Our philosopher came very near abandoning his profession. But he had some acquaintances in other professions, too, and he came to realize that they were not in a much better case. Even the scientists were in an unhappy situation at the present time. They were frightened to death, and quite properly, at the consequences in human disaster of what they were finding out. And, since the dawn of the theory of relativity, the securities of the physical sciences, the old smug assumptions as to the nature of even space and time, were gone. Nor was it possible any longer to tell where one science, chemistry, ended and another, biology, began. It was even more impossible to tell how much of science there was, or even could be, in the so-called social sciences. For these aped the methods and language of the physical sciences, but with less security and less success. They succeeded in not being literature without ever really becoming knowledge.

Nor was it any use deciding to be a practical man. Long professional preoccupation with theory had unfitted him for the life of action. And our philosopher had not been uncognizant of the fact that the practical men, above all, had brought the world into chaos; the short views had had the most fateful long-term consequences, the realistic diplomats had written the dossiers of disaster, and the practical men had not even arranged the world effectively for their own happiness. Philosophy might be in a parlous state, but it was clearly no worse off than that of any other human enterprise. Had business, government, or education been more successful?

As our philosopher saw the bad state in which most human activities found themselves, he became, if not arrogant, at least a little prouder of his own profession and a little less modest about its possibilities. He was wrong, he decided, nearly all modern philosophers were wrong, in being so bedazzled and confused by the modern world. The modern world was complicated enough, in all conscience, and so was the apparatus and the methodology of knowledge. But surely philosophy had become overscrupulous and overrefined and overfastidious. The eye is a complex enough organ, but it is simple for the undistracted and healthy eye to see. Had not, our philosopher thought, philosophers a need to seek anew the indispensable innocence of mind and simplicity of heart? Not omniscience, but steadiness of vision, was required. It



is possible to understand the whole without knowing everything in detail. A while ago, he knew, there was a movement called Critical Realism in philosophy. What philosophers needed was a return to naïve realism. Philosophers live, after all, in the same world in which other people live. They might say, like Shylock, that they bleed and suffer like others. They could at least report what the world seems like and feels like, how it impinges upon an absorbed intelligence, unbribed by a desire to believe what it wishes, or to convert or to bedazzle.

Simple men often, despite the complexity of the world in which they lived, have had a wonderfully steady sense of things, of the ways of the universe. But men did not stay simple long. They were distorted by the past they inherited, by their uneasiness, their practical necessities, and the urgencies of their passions. The philosopher could retain or recover the innocence of mind which men, unconfused, might all have. Just as a poet restores to us the direct colors of the world, it was the function of the philosopher to remind us of the basic simplicities of things which prejudice and verbalism often obscure. Our philosopher decided he would learn all he could from the scientists and the practical men of the world and from artists and from simple human beings in their daily doings. But he would keep his own counsel and speak his own mind and heart. And if he spoke with sufficient sincerity and followed the lead of knowledge, he would speak the heart and mind of all mankind.

The philosopher led from thenceforth a blameless and relatively happy life. For he spoke of first and last things and his own mind was quieted and clarified—and, eventually, those of a few others, pupils and friends. There was a good deal he had to unlearn. What a sheaf of theories he had put between himself and the world! How much he had prevented himself from having any knowledge or increasing it, by beating himself on the head with tools provided by the professional philosophers who proved that knowledge was impossible altogether. How much he had allowed himself to walk in daydream systems provided by the somnambulists who imposed their fantasies upon impressionable and wishful sages. He would have to become like a child again, to see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, look at the world with his uncorrupted mind. He would have to learn not to make his wishes identical with the geography of existence, or his hopes with the sometimes unpalatable truth. He would have to see where his ideas had their origin in life, and how they were verified in experience.

And, as for the language he would use to speak to others, ultimate things, both first and last things, were simple, and if he spoke clearly and simply as some of the greatest philosophers had spoken, he found he did not have to lapse into the jargon of the schools. He might even use the language of myth and poetry, because for some of the things he wished to say, particularly those concerning human values and human ideals, no literal language was adequate to express them. These ideals might *have* to be said in the vocabulary of drama and poetry.

The great world that came to read our philosopher were not sure, therefore, that he was a philosopher at all! "He is a poet," said some, and in their voices was a touch of scorn. "He is merely speaking common sense," said some, and turned away, for this was much too banal to be classed as philosophy. "He is perhaps on the road to wisdom," said some, "for, though he stammers a little, he is reading the script of nature, and one feels a kinship of feeling in listening to what he says. He is saying nothing new, nothing fantastic. He is saying what we all are trying to say, since we are born into the same world and live under the same sky. He says what we all should be saying if we had not been misled by whimsical thinkers who impose their private dreams on the public reality."

And by the time our philosopher's ideas were public property, they scarcely seemed to be philosophical ideas at all. They were everywhere regarded as the sanity of normal men awake in daily existence. Our philosopher was seen to be merely a mature human being speaking to other mature human beings. And as they understood him, they were all philosophers together.

This is the first of three "preview" articles from Irwin Edman's "Philosopher's Quest," to be published in March by Viking Press.

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THE FINE ARTS

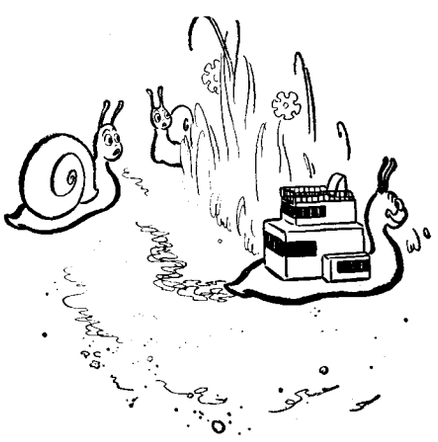
MUSEUM CURATORS AND THE LITERARY GRACES

I HAVE been reading, rather belatedly I fear, an article entitled "Double-Talk in the Museum World," which appeared in *The New York Times* Book Review Section early this fall. Its author is William Germain Dooley, seemingly a born hand at putting two and two asunder. Mr. Dooley's point is that art museum curators are incoherent, pompous, and complicated writers, who confuse the public by using a secret or ambiguous language. It is a simple point, but Mr. Dooley has trouble with it, as when he refers to footnotes as giving art historians "a chance to belabor each other with genteel bladders of dispute." There have been happier metaphors, I think: by Ruskin, who "raved" according to Mr. Dooley; or by Walter Pater, who "swooned in lush prose."

I disagree completely with Mr. Dooley's argument, though in fairness I must explain that I have spent my adult life in and around art museums, so that I am prejudiced in favor of my colleagues. Still, it seems to me that even a casual glance at recent museum publications will refute Mr. Dooley's charge. And the charge can do damage, if believed. The public is ready enough to assume that art is difficult; it needs only a little persuasion to believe that a curatorial conspiracy keeps it so.

For the sake of brevity we may confine our inquiry to writing lately published by the art museums in Greater New York. There is, to begin with, the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum,* which appears ten times a year and contains articles by staff members relating to their various fields. I do not say that the *Bulletin* is hammock reading for the uninitiated. But I do claim that it publishes material of decided interest to those who are already making some effort to sort out and understand the historical and qualitative facts about art. The *Bulletin* covers a wide range of subjects; its articles are short, well illustrated, and authoritative. What is more important, from the viewpoint opposed to Mr. Dooley's, they are mostly very well written. In a recent article, for example, Mr. A. Hyatt Mayor, the museum's curator of prints, in speaking of Vermeer of Delft, says: ". . . no other painter, with all the liberty in the world, has ever surpassed that last gravity of balance." To understand his meaning, you should have seen Vermeer's paintings, of course. But if you have seen them, or even if you plan to see them, the sentence is unusually felicitous, for it underscores the tremendous dignity which marks Vermeer's handling of homely subjects, raising them to the highest level of art. How is it possible to say better that Vermeer's placing is as important as his enchanted surface? And Mr. Mayor's writing abounds in such illuminating phrases.

Mr. Mayor is by no means the Metropolitan's only skilled writer, and I mention him first simply because I have read him most recently. Mr. Harry B. Wehle, the museum's curator of paintings, is for me one of the most enjoyable of art historians, deft, assured, the possessor of an ironic style in which mild disgruntlement struggles amicably against deep personal pleasure in art. Here he is describing a nineteenth-century American picture he does not really admire —"a swooping figment of the imagination of Daniel Huntington, [which] looks not inappropriate hanging at a high level." Or here he applies to a beloved Rubens a beautifully precise reference to "the learned and elaborate musculature of the male figures." Again, the reader must know or plan to know something of Rubens. But art historians cannot be expected to act always as Seeing Eyes for the public; perhaps their principal function is to encourage people to open their own eyes a little wider. To anyone who takes the trouble to look at a few typical works by Rubens, the use in combination of the words "learned" and "elaborate" must seem remarkably condensed and accurate.



Miss Gisela M. A. Richter, curator of Greek and Roman art at the Metropolitan, describes her complicated subject with admirable clarity and the utmost authority. Mr. William M. Ivins, Jr., lately retired as curator of prints, is a vivid writer, with a special talent for attacking the academic pretensions that Mr. Dooley finds in all museum folk. In last February's *Bulletin,* for instance, he wrote: "The men of the Renaissance, who rounded the Cape and discovered America, would have been amused to know that the most important thing they did was to have a fashion for classical notions." The sentence brings us up short in our tendency to consider the Renaissance in terms of its stylistic preoccupations; the phrase "fashion for classical notions" is exceptionally telling for this purpose. There are other staff members of the museum who write with comparable liveliness and color. On the whole, I think, the Metropolitan's *Bulletin* can be described in words which Mr. Ivins has used in another connection: "It carries its learning lightly and speaks with an easy air of directness and simplicity."

OVER at the Brooklyn Museum, John I. H. Baur, curator of paintings and sculpture, is for my money one of the most capable art historians we have, both as to thoroughness of research and clarity of expression. His field is nineteenth-century American painting and sculpture, a field whose lesser figures have been so neglected that the task of documentation is especially hard. But Mr. Baur has rescued from partial, sometimes from total, oblivion a number of artists who are now widely accepted as important links in our pictorial tradition—Eastman Johnson, William Sidney Mount, John Quidor, and others. He has written short monographs on these painters which supply carefully authenticated, factual material and sensitive interpretations. His style is fluent, modest, and convincing, and anyone can enjoy it who has not got one of Mr. Dooley's chips on his shoulder.

It must be admitted that modern art has been a favorite victim of obscurant writers. Yet I think it can be proved that most befuddled criticism of contemporary art, in America anyway, has been produced by people out of museums rather than in. At least I am sure that no one in this country has come anywhere near Alfred H. Barr, Jr., of the Museum of Modern Art, in brilliance of exposition as to modern painting and sculpture. Mr. Barr's catalogues for the museum have long been recognized as superb contributions to scholarship

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and understanding. But precisely because they are so unaffected and clear, his readers may not stop to appreciate their inspired literary quality. I was reminded of this quality recently when reading a museum press release on the acquisition of Picasso's etchings for Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*. Mr. Barr therein writes: "Certain creatures Picasso fumbles badly: the ponderous butterfly, for instance, and the lion, which he reduces to a mild puma; but the ram is masterly and so is the gray wolf fading into the gray night." If you have seen Picasso's monochromatic handling of the wolf, slinking back into its own color, Mr. Barr's description is unforgettable. Even if you have not, you can admire the sinewy logic of his prose. The passage occurs, let me repeat, in a press release rather than in a formal publication. Perhaps this makes little difference: for it is part of Mr. Barr's distinction that he would write as carefully for one as for the other.

Mr. Lloyd Goodrich of the Whitney Museum of American Art has won almost universal respect as a critic and historian of native painting and sculpture. His monographs on Eakins and Homer are key works in the story of American culture; they are simple, vigorous, precise, and eminently sane. In clarity alone they challenge comparison with the best biographical histories published in England, where critical writing is automatically meaningful, just as in France it is usually tinged with the drumbeats and sobs of the graveyard farewell. Moreover, Mr. Goodrich writes equally well at shorter length. His foreword for the Whitney's "Pioneers of Modern Art in America" exhibition of last spring is so compact and informative that it is hard to imagine anyone studying contemporary American painting without it.

I have mentioned, as I said I would, only recent writing by curators in New York museums. There is invaluable and *readable* material being published each year by museums all over the country. The difficulty is that this material is usually available only to a local museum membership or in large libraries. And here I would like to suggest that it is not the writing of curators which is obscure, but their method of distribution. There ought to be, as a beginning, a competently edited yearbook which would contain the best short pieces originally published in American museum bulletins, pamphlets, and catalogues. Widely circulated, well illustrated, attractive in format, such a book could be a worth-while venture. Furthermore, I think it would prove to be well enough written so that Mr. Dooley might follow Lord Byron's procedure: "If I miss my spring, I go growling back into my lair."

JAMES THRALL SOBY.

LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Marlowe: "The Passionate Shepherd." 2. Dorothy Parker: "Inventory." 3. Lovelace: "To Lucasta." 4. Swinburne: "A Match." 5. Elizabeth Browning: "Sonnet XIV." 6. Samuel Hoffenstein: "Love Songs, at Once Tender and Informative." 7. Tennyson: "Locksley Hall." 8. Virgil: "Eclogue." 9. Shakespeare: "Sonnet CXVI." 10. Byron: "Don Juan." 11. Sidney: "My True-Love Hath My Heart." 12. James Hogg: "Love Is Like a Dizziness." 13. Suckling: "The Constant Lover." 14. Dryden: "Alexander's Feast." 15. Shakespeare: "Midsummer Night's Dream." 16. Tennyson: "In Memoriam." 17. Samuel Rogers: "Jacqueline." 18. Poe: "Annabel Lee." 19. Marlowe: "Hero and Leander." 20. Hunt: "Abou Ben Adhem."

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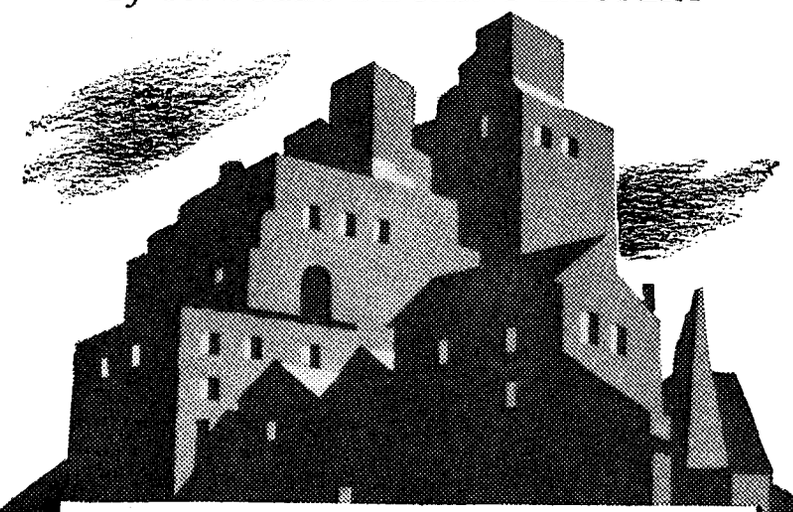

➡ While she waited for word from her husband, Consuelo and some young artist friends sought refuge in a dead and ruined village in the south of France. There they worked together on a dream made of stone . . . to bring life to the village—to raise the ruins, and rebuild them to medieval beauty. "Everywhere she goes Consuelo finds wonderful and poetic people because she, too, carries within herself the wonder and the poetry. Her book contains at once something of autobiography, something of a novel, something of a poem."—*André Maurois.* *$2.75*

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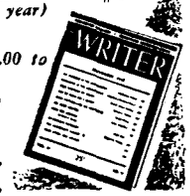

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THE CURIES' FOUR YEARS IN A SHED

Russel Crouse relates
THE STRANGE DEATH OF DOT KING

These and 21 other features in the January issue of ENCORE, 25 cents at leading newsstands

NEW EDITIONS

JOHN DOS PASSOS'S trilogy, "U. S. A.," has worn well. Indeed, it has done more and better than wear. It was interesting and exciting when it appeared volume by volume—"42nd Parallel," "1919," "The Big Money" from 1930 to 1936. It was impressive when published and read as a unit in 1937. And it is even more impressive now, when it is read again in the new and handsome, beautifully printed, three-volume edition lavishly illustrated by Reginald Marsh (Houghton, Mifflin, $12.50). Years and a second world war have overlaid the period with which Dos Passos dealt, but this accretion has accentuated rather than blurred the values of the author's multiple fiction. He showed us a society racked by internal strains, driving blindly into financial and economic collapse, threatened with total disintegration. We have lived and are still living through the sequel of that action. History is repeating itself with differences that serve to illuminate both past and present. "U. S. A." could never before say as much to us as it can today, because we have never before been so well informed.

When Dos Passos wrote "Manhattan Transfer" (1925), he turned his back upon the individualistic romanticism of his earlier novels; when he began to write "U. S. A.," he was a realist who had served his apprenticeship. But he had not articled himself to such older masters as Zola and Dreiser. Facing problems posed by raw material, selection, assimilation, and communication, he had developed his own techniques. Straightforward, sometimes plodding, accumulative narrative was not for him. He demanded variety, pace, change of pace, changing angles of vision: the kind of freedom that is enjoyed by the motion picture, but too seldom used to advantage. So he developed and perfected the "Newsreel," "The Camera Eye," and the highly concentrated "Biographies," to supplement and enrich the chapters of more conventional narration. The provocative laconism of the newspaper headline, which conceals meaning almost as often as it expresses it; journalistic jargon and cant, quoted in fractions; the poly rhythms of free verse: these were called upon to assist vigorous, lively prose in the task of declaring what Dos Passos thought of the society in which he had come to maturity. The brief, heavily charged biographies of such personages as Debs, Burbank, Bryan, Veblen, Insull, Isadora Duncan, and Morgan, stood behind and among and gave social solidity to the fictitious lives of J. Ward Moorehouse, Charley Anderson, Mac, Dick Savage, and other creatures of Dos Passos's making.

"U. S. A." is an exploration along many avenues, and on several levels, of the Great American Success Story, as it was written before and during the first World War, through the post-war depression, through the boom of the Twenties, to Wall Street's collapse. Dos Passos's version is a sad and sordid, almost hopeless history, which falls short of tragedy only because its leading actors are not, and were never meant to be, of tragic stature. Tragedy cannot exist without dignity; and where is the dignity of a Moorehouse, an Anderson, or even a Mary French? The author's leftist admirers were disturbed and seemed to be surprised by the trilogy's "negativism," by the fact that it exhibited so little faith in radical action, the Party, the Russian example. Their surprise was ill-founded. Dos Passos had always viewed the simplifications of the extreme Left with interested but wary detachment. He had never built on the scaffolding which was to betray his own Glenn Spotswood, in "Adventures of a Young Man." His mind had always been suspicious of simple solutions; proof against the persuasive pressure of comradely solidarity. As a result, he has not had to mimic others in acts of political recantation.

That "U. S. A." presents a partial view of its subject, there is no doubt. Its almost 1,700 pages are packed with greed, lust, selfishness, dishonesty, and drunkenness, with weakness and vanity, with cruelty and futility, with deception and self-deception. There is little virtue. The reader is scarcely reminded of those still vital strands in our tradition, which the author himself, in "The Ground We Stand On," has traced back to Jefferson, Franklin, Roger Williams and Sam Adams. But, for all that, I know of no other single work into which an American author has put as much of his generation as Dos Passos has put into "U. S. A." I am not sure that our period has any American work of fiction to set above it. This latest edition, illustrated by the right artist for the task, has been justifiably designed for permanence. BEN RAY REDMAN.

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The New Recordings

COMPOSITION, PERFORMER, ALBUM NUMBER NUMBER OF RECORDS	ENGINEERING		REMARKS
	Recording Technique	*Surface*	
HAMLET, Six Excerpts. Maurice Evans. Incidental music, Roger Adams. Columbia M651 (3) $3.85	Expertly done in restrained radio style. Echo chamber for the ghost. Evans's mike technique is first rate — no blasting, perfect clarity. High fidelity.	A—	*(See below)* Six famous monologues, with a few bits of dialogue for contrast. Musical "curtains," some music in background — spare, and therefore good; in its place.
MOUSSORGSKY—RAVEL, PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION. N. Y. Philharmonic, Rodzinski. Columbia M 641 (4) $4.85	Up to Columbia's best recent standards. A more solid-sounding recording than old Boston version, with greater tonal range.	A—	Splendid new recording of Ravel's unbeatable orchestration of original piano piece. Other versions— Stokowsky, Caillet, etc., cannot compare. You will find original piano version most interesting comparison — get it and see what Ravel did.
Compare: (Original piano version:) Alex. Brailowsky. Victor M 861 (4) $4.85	One of Victor's better piano records, which gets the "big" sound of this music.	B+	

HAMLET

MAURICE EVANS, the GI Hamlet, has made another album of Hamlet excerpts for Columbia (*above*). This one is not only a good sampling of the well-known Evans interpretation and hence somewhat of a classic, but in a number of ways the album points up some of the more permanent values to be gained from radio's dramatic techniques and from advances in recording—soap opera and children's dreadfuls notwithstanding.

Here are some mental observations, on hearing these records:

1. *Music.* Radio has made the musical backdrop and the tonal curtain so familiar that a spoken record without at least some music is as unnatural as soup without salt. Radio music, like most radio drama, is generally speaking a tissue of platitudes. Yet there's no reason why the technique of radio music can't be used well, or even strikingly. Here ("Hamlet") it is well used; first because of its brevity and unobtrusiveness, second because in the more absolute sense the short musical passages here are well above the average radio stuff in content. More content than this might bring the music too much to the fore—and it is a debatable question: should dramatic music ever be important enough to be foreground? No, radio composers say. I'm not too sure myself.

2. *Evans.* Evans is an accomplished microphone artist. He knows every trick of getting personality, emotions, inflections, past the electrical barrier. And yet, at this close range, his acting personality is somewhat overwhelming. One feels the stage, and the distance across the footlights that the stage actor is trained to bridge. Evans, the actor, is emotionally speaking, too close for comfort. The tonsils show. And yet again, come to think of it, maybe it's Shakespeare's fault! The lines of "Hamlet" are stage lines, not microphone script.

3. *Fidelity.* One of the more remarkable improvements in recent recording is the more natural and intelligible sound of the human voice on records. Part of it is increased frequency range—which brings out the sibilants as never before. (In "Records in Review," *SRL* February 28, 1942, I spoke of the ineffectiveness of Edna St. Vincent Millay on records: she read with what I called a "microphone lisp." Nor shall I ever forget somebody's recording of "When to the thethionth of thweet thilent thought I thummon up remembranth of thingth patht.") But in addition to greater tonal range, there is evidently a remarkable reduction in certain types of "ringing" distortion that made many voices, especially male singers, painful to listen to on records. The "Hamlet" album is wonderfully natural in these respects, and the general improvement in voice recording opens up new fields for poetry and drama.

4. *Schools and colleges.* Evans on records should be as persuasive in the Shakespeare class as he was to the GI. And the radio techniques used (including the electrical ghost, who is Evans rattling in the echo chamber) are entirely familiar to today's kids. Try it, teachers.

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the Phoenix Nest

FOR ARTHUR MACHEN

To be inscribed on the flyleaf of "The White People"

FOR you, the veil grows thin,
And, armed with heart,
Your fearless mind goes in;
The waters part.

You go; and you return.
You tell the tales,
And in your phrases burn
Forgotten Grails.

The days of men are short
And full of fear.
And if the Other Sort
By chance draw near

We fall to headlong flight
In mortal dread—
But you withstand the night,
Being wondrous bred.

So to your lonely task
Turn you once more:
Tell what we fear to ask—
And bar the door!

JEANNE BENET.

The above poet is no relation of mine. Her work has now been frequently appearing in various media.

* * *

Writes Daniel Henderson of this city:

Good Housekeeping Magazine's announcement of a $10,000 prize story contest for faculty members of United States colleges and universities led me to inquire into the history of prize literary contests in America. They are as old as Yankee Doodle.

The first competition was conducted by a Philadelphia periodical, *American Museum*, which subscriber George Washington declared to be a magazine "uniformly conducted with taste, attention, and propriety." It is not recorded whether he and his fellow-subscribers Tom Paine and Ben Franklin lifted their quills to compete.

The next prize offer was made in 1821 by George Pope Morris, publisher of the *New York Mirror: A Repository of Miscellaneous Productions in Prose and Verse.* Morris claimed to have created the literary competition, and was indeed the pioneer in awarding a prize for fiction. Nathaniel Parker Willis, noted man-of-letters, competed at the start of his career for a *Mirror* prize.

Then Edgar Allan Poe, with his "Manuscript Found in a Bottle," found it magical enough to win the $100 prize for a short story offered by the Baltimore publication *The Saturday Visitor.* Poe respected the prize idea so much that he afterwards quarreled with William Evans Burton, with whom he was associated as editor of *Gentleman's Magazine,* because, he said, Burton had been dishonorable in a prize offer. It appears that the title of the publication did not govern editorial conduct: "The Ladies Compete—and Win."

The Casket of Philadelphia, which published "Flowers of Literature, Wit, and Sentiment," welcomed the first woman prize-winner in the person of Miss Siggers. It was not surprising that her manuscript came from Boston.

Miss Siggers was the forerunner of the more noted Miss Eliza Leslie, who some years afterwards won a prize offered by *Godey's Lady's Book* for her story "Miss Washington Potts." Miss Leslie won such renown that she was appointed editor of the newly-created *Miss Leslie's Magazine.* It lasted less than a year.

You will recall, no doubt, the short story contests of *Black Cat, Colliers' Weekly* under Norman Hapgood, and *Pictorial Review,* which brought to light many writers who developed into book authors. As for prizes offered by book publishers, much information about them may be found in Bessie Graham's little book "Literary Prizes and Their Winners."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Perhaps the college teachers who read the* Review *would like to know the facts about the* Good Housekeeping *contest. The prizes are $5,000; $3,000, and $2,000. Number of words, 2,000 to 20,000. There is no limit to the range of subject matter. The contest closes February 1, 1947. Judges: Editor Herbert R. Mayes and his staff.*

—*From* Knickerbocker Magazine.

The editor of *Miss Leslie's Magazine* exhibiting the mode [April 1834].

The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Issue (1921-1946) of *Voices,* now a quarterly of poetry, edited by Harold Vinal, reminds us of one of the little magazines that did not, as the clever rhyme had it, die to make verse free, but never once suspended publication. Certain special issues have been devoted recently to a summation of the work of some major poet, or to a group of poets, and there is a winter issue in prospect which will publish contemporary French and Italian poetry in translation. *Voices* makes an appeal for survival to its old friends and admirers. I think it deserves survival. A sustaining subscription is $10, and you can give larger amounts if you will. Make any check payable to *Voices,* 687 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y.

* * *

Mrs. Marion Mills of Waterloo, N. Y., sends in one vote for Archibald MacLeish as her favorite American poet; and Albert Andross of *Sunset Magazine,* Lane Publishing Co., San Francisco, discusses his choice as follows:

I should like to enter a vote for Conrad Aiken, both as a great favorite of mine among his generation of American poets and as something of an incompletely appreciated one. As an undergraduate of Reed College in the early thirties, I was somewhat over-exposed — by the self-conscious intellectuals of that precious institution—to the monumental importance of T. S. Eliot to American poetry. I found an antidote (just for myself, of course) in Aiken, and even worked out something of a respectable thesis by which I set him up as even more than Eliot the spokesman of the Wasteland of the creative and emotional spirit of the time. In ten years or so my values have, of course, changed, and I no longer find him the colossal figure he once seemed; but even now some of the Preludes, "Tetelestai," "The Road," "And in the Hanging Gardens" are as evocative of a time and place as Millay's "Renascence" and "Recuerdo" are of another if more definite one. There was once an excellent book on Aiken—Houston Peterson's "The Melody of Chaos"—of which I had a copy, unfortunately lost. I fear the book is out of print, but a new edition would certainly not be amiss.

* * *

The following is from Mary Gnaedinger, of All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42 St., New York City.

I was interested in the discussion of Mr. Baring-Gould's article in *Harper's* which you ran in The Phoenix Nest for October 26. I read the article in *Harper's* and I understand that "fandom" was very pleased with this picture of themselves. I personally felt a little aggrieved that F. F. M. [Famous Fantastic Mysteries] was not mentioned. We are credited over and over with having the best readers' department

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of any "fantastic" magazine and the auctioning of our original pictures has become a necessary part of any "fantastic" convention. I note with extreme interest that Mr. Baring-Gould is a great collector of our kind of fiction. Do you suppose that he would care to suggest some books that might do for F. F. M.? If you think he would, would it be too much to ask that you tell him of our perpetual search?

* * *

J. E. Middleton of *Saturday Night, The Canadian Illustrated Weekly* tells me that in Paul Oehser's Chautauqua poem the title of the song the diva sang is not "Lo, hear the gentle lark" (as everybody says) but "Lo, *here* the gentle lark!

* * *

Mrs. Catherine Carter of Oakland, California, writes:

A student, reported in Mary Wrinn's *Hollow Reed*, wrote what I think your Nesters would enjoy, the two-word poem:

THE ANTIQUITY OF FASHION

Eve's
Leaves.

* * *

And thus Mary Poole of the Gulf Publishing Company, Houston, Texas:

I have been considering the interesting question of America's Favorite Poet. It seems to me the honor rests between Edna St. Vincent Millay and Robert Frost, though each explores universalities within personal confines of regionalism or personality. I think Frost has the best chance of consolidating the appreciation of the popular and the intelligentsia. He has gained his prestige from the beauty, integrity, and apparent simplicity of his work, and done much as a consultant in such schools as the University of Iowa's Creative Writing Circle and the Breadloaf Writers group to teach and advance poetry in America. I personally am more interested in such moderns as Auden, and in Eliot and Robinson Jeffers, though I do not think they appeal to as large a number of Americans.

* * *

I have found a good motto for The Phoenix Nest, whose office is really to resuscitate old books, in the ever-verdant Chaucer:

For out of olde feldes, as men seith,
Cometh al this newe corn froe yeer to yere;
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

Which is, of course, from the immortal "Parlement of Foules"!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

PERSONALS

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